

information to SSA. SSA will provide a suggested format for the consent form, which may either be adopted by the grantee, or tailored to include any state or agency-level requirements. Applicants selected under this announcement must provide SSA with a copy of the consent form. The Federal Project Officer must approve this consent form prior to the enrollment of any project participants.

- The use of Form HIPAA SSA-827, *Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration*. This form is required as written authorization from a claimant for SSA to obtain information required for processing an application for disability benefits.

- The use of Form SSA-3288, *Social Security Administration's Consent for Release of Information*. This form will allow SSA to give information concerning the client to the grantee and to the evaluation contractor.

- If necessary, the grantee will attain the approval of their Institutional Review Board (IRB), and furnish SSA with a copy of the approval document.

Copies of Forms HIPAA SSA-827 and SSA-3288 can be obtained on-line through the SSA Web site: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>.

3. Training Data

Grantee staff that attend training will complete a pre-training test of knowledge regarding the disability program, as well as a post-training test. They will also complete a training evaluation form at the time of training. The pre and post training tests will provide measures of the impact of training on knowledge about the disability application and decision process. The participant evaluation will provide a measure of the perceived value and quality to the training.

D. Reporting

Grantees will be required to submit quarterly reports to SSA, OAG, within 30 days following the end of each quarter (using the initial award date as the project start date). These reports will assist SSA in providing proper oversight and technical assistance to grantees.

Quarterly Report Format

- Description of the project (first quarter report only);
- Actions taken during the quarter;
- Planned activities for upcoming quarter(s);
- Number of project participants enrolled, to date, and at the close of the report period;
- Number of individuals who refused to enroll;
- Any problems or proposed changes in the project; and

- Additional summary information.

E. Monitoring

SSA FPOs will be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of each cooperative agreement. SSA project personnel (SSA FPO and/or other staff) expect to visit each project at least once in each year of the cooperative agreement. In addition, Regional or field office personnel may accompany SSA FPOs on site visits. The design of this project anticipates frequent interaction between the local FO, the state DDS office, and the grantee. SSA project staff will hold conference calls on a national, regional, and/or local basis at least once monthly during start up of the projects (six months following award), and at least quarterly during the rest of the project period. The purpose of these calls will be to coordinate activities across the project sites, resolve problems, and provide oversight, support, and technical assistance to all parties.

F. Technical Assistance

SSA will provide technical assistance to the grantees and will monitor and evaluate the progress of the projects. Technical assistance will be provided with the support and assistance of a contractor. Awardees will be informed of the procedures for accessing technical assistance within 60 days following award. Grantees will be notified by email about any changes in or additions to technical assistance procedures.

Section V. Application Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

A. Application Process

The cooperative agreement application process consists of a one-stage, full application. Independent reviewers will competitively review and score the application, using the evaluation criteria specified in this announcement (see Section V).

B. Application Requirements

Applications will be initially screened for responsiveness to this announcement. If judged irrelevant, the application will be returned. Also, applications that do not meet the applicant eligibility criteria in Section III.A above will not be accepted.

1. *Number of Copies*: The applicant must submit one original signed and dated application and a minimum of two copies. The submission of seven additional copies is optional and will be appreciated, but will not affect the evaluation or scoring of the application.

2. *Length*: A project abstract of not more than one page must precede the narrative of each application. The

program narrative portion of the application (Section III of the SSA-96-BK) may not exceed 30 double-spaced typed pages (or 15 single-spaced pages) on one side of the paper only, using standard (8½" x 11") size paper, and 12-point font. The attachments to support the program narrative count towards the 30-page limit. Resumes, job descriptions and letters of cooperation/collaboration do not count in the 30-page limit.

Section VI.B contains a detailed checklist for the application format.

C. Review and Evaluation

All applications that meet the deadline for application submission November 25, 2003, will be screened to determine completeness and conformity to the requirements of this announcement. Complete and conforming applications will then be evaluated. The results of this review and evaluation will assist the Commissioner in making award decisions.

Although the results of this review are a primary factor considered in making award decisions, the review score is not the only factor used. In selecting eligible applicants to be funded, consideration also may be given to achieving an equitable distribution of assistance among geographic regions of the country and to diverse populations.

Applications that are complete and conform to the requirements of this announcement will be reviewed competitively against the evaluation criteria specified in Section V.B. of this announcement. Applicants must complete the Form SSA-96-BK. See Section VI for instructions on obtaining Form SSA-96-BK.

Applications that pass the screening process will be independently reviewed by at least three individuals (primarily qualified persons from outside of SSA), who will evaluate and score the applications based on the evaluation criteria specified in Section V.B.

D. Application Approval

Cooperative agreement awards will be made pursuant to the availability of funds and at the discretion of SSA. The official award document is the "Notice of Cooperative Agreement Award," which will provide the amount and purpose of the award, the duration of the agreement, the total project period for which support is contemplated, applicable reporting requirements, the amount of financial participation required from the applicant, and any special terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.