

Code of 1968 that engages in lobbying (in accordance with section 18 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, 2 U.S.C. 1611).

Note: Any protection and advocacy organization must fully explain how it will ensure there will be no conflict of interest between providing benefits planning and assistance services and outreach, and delivering protection and advocacy services to beneficiaries. In particular, they must show how they will ensure full protection and advocacy services will be provided when the complaint is against the Benefits Specialist or organization. Also, any organization that applies to be an employment network under SSA's Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program must fully explain how it will ensure there will be no conflict of interest if it also receives a cooperative agreement to provide benefits planning, assistance, and outreach. This is especially important in the area of assisting beneficiaries with PASS plans or other work incentives which will enable them to keep receiving benefits, thus delaying, or preventing entirely, payments to the employment network.

B. Targeted Geographic Area/Population

While SSA recognizes that not every SSDI or SSI beneficiary with a disability will access benefits planning, assistance, and outreach, it must be available to each via the project targeting Wyoming. Therefore, the awarded project must make those services available to all SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities within that geographic area. Because youth with disabilities is such an important population to target for those services, each project must make benefits planning, assistance, and outreach available to SSI recipients as young as age 14. In providing benefits planning, assistance, and outreach, projects must make concerted and aggressive efforts to address the needs of underserved individuals with disabilities from diverse ethnic and racial communities (e.g., Native Americans, Vietnamese). In particular, applicants should show how they intend to do outreach in ways that ensure interaction with diverse communities.

Entities are encouraged to collaborate with other public and/or private organizations (e.g., DOL One-Stop Career Center), through interagency agreements or other mechanisms, if necessary, to integrate services to beneficiaries with disabilities. Entities should also consider collaboration with other organizations to prepare an application for a cooperative agreement to provide benefits planning, assistance, and outreach to all beneficiaries within Wyoming.

An application developed jointly by more than one agency or organization must identify only one organization as the lead organization and official applicant. The other participating agencies and organizations can be included as co-applicants, subgrantees or subcontractors.

C. Application Process

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

D. Application Consideration

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

Applications that are complete and conform to the requirements of this announcement, the instructions in Form SSA-96-BK, and the separate instructions for completing Part III, Program Narrative (of the SSA-96-BK), will be reviewed competitively against the evaluation criteria specified in Part V of this announcement and evaluated by Federal and non-Federal personnel. See Part VI for instructions on obtaining Form SSA-96-BK. The results of this review and evaluation will assist the Commissioner in making the award decision. Although the results of this review are a primary factor considered in making the decisions, the review score is not the only factor used. In selecting eligible applicants to be funded, consideration will be given to achieving statewide accessibility to benefits planning, assistance, and outreach.

The application requirements in Part IV are the minimum amount of required project information. Projects are responsible for collecting management information (MI) according to the guidelines provided, producing regular reports according to the guidelines provided, and producing a final report which analyzes the successes and/or failures of the methodology used to provide benefits planning, assistance, and outreach to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries, and others.

All projects must adhere to SSA's Privacy and Confidentiality Regulations (20 CFR part 401) for maintaining records of individuals, as well as provide specific safeguards surrounding beneficiary information sharing, paper/computer records/data, and other issues

potentially arising from providing benefits planning, assistance, and outreach to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities. Personal beneficiary data should be accessible to only project personnel by way of locked file cabinets, computer password protections, etc.

E. Application Approval

A cooperative agreement award will be issued within the constraints of available Federal funds and at the discretion of SSA. The official award document is the "Notice of Cooperative Agreement Award." It will provide the amount of the award, the purpose of the award, the term of the agreement, the total project period for which support is contemplated, the amount of financial participation required, and any special terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.

F. Costs

Federal cooperative agreement funds may be used for allowable costs incurred by awardees in conducting direct benefits planning, assistance, and outreach services to SSA's beneficiaries with disabilities. These costs could include administrative and overall project management costs, within the limitations discussed earlier.

Federal cooperative agreement funds are not intended to cover costs that are reimbursable under an existing public or private program, such as social services, rehabilitation services, or education. No SSDI or SSI beneficiary can be charged for any service delivered under a Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program cooperative agreement, including preparing a PASS. Benefits planning and assistance services are intended to be free and must be made accessible to all SSA beneficiaries with disabilities in the project's target geographical area. Project funds should not be used to create new benefits or extensions of existing benefits.

Part IV. Program Requirements

A. General Requirements

The cooperative agreement awardees shall:

1. Work with SSA's technical assistance and training contractor in arranging training for Benefits Specialists;
2. Provide a brief project description to the contractor;
3. Employ Benefits Specialists and have them attend an initial 5-day face-to-face training session within 90 days of award. SSA's technical assistance and training contractor will provide