

technical assistance and training to projects about SSA's programs and work incentives (*e.g.*, trial-work period (TWP), extended period of eligibility (EPE), impairment-related work expenses (IRWE), Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), 1619(a) and (b), and Medicaid buy-in provisions/ Balanced Budget Act); Medicare and Medicaid; and on other Federal work incentives programs. The applicant is responsible for providing technical assistance and training to Benefits Specialists about State and local programs.

4. Have Benefits Specialists attend refresher/follow-up and new hire training sessions, as needed, and take part in the evaluation of training activities and the evaluation of ongoing training needs evaluation by the contractor.

5. Within 90 days after award, the applicant will ensure Benefits Specialists have completed training, have developed outreach plans and begun initial outreach, and are prepared to provide direct benefits planning and assistance services to all SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities within the targeted geographic area who are requesting these services;

6. Finalize the MI system data collection elements (as defined by SSA) and procedures with SSA and assure compatibility with the VCU data collection program within 60 days after award;

7. Develop and submit quarterly reports that contain MI to SSA, Office of Acquisition and Grants (OAG);

8. Develop and submit quarterly financial reports to SSA, OAG;

9. Provide a description of all planned changes to the project design for approval by SSA prior to implementation;

10. Cooperate with SSA in scheduling and conducting site visits;

11. Develop and maintain a collaborative working relationship with the local servicing Social Security office;

12. Implement an ongoing management and quality assurance process that uses MI data; and

13. Attend scheduled conferences, participate in panel and small group discussions, and make project presentations.

B. Description of Projects

The project awardee shall:

- Provide direct individualized benefits planning and assistance, including information on the availability of protection and advocacy services, to beneficiaries with disabilities, including individuals

participating in the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program established under section 1148 of the Act, the program established under section 1619(a) of the Act, and other programs that are designed to encourage disabled beneficiaries to work;

- Conduct ongoing outreach efforts to beneficiaries with disabilities (and to the families of such beneficiaries) who are potentially eligible to participate in Federal or State work incentives programs that are designed to assist beneficiaries with disabilities to work, by preparing and disseminating information and explaining such programs. In conducting benefits planning, assistance, and outreach activities, project awardees will work in cooperation with other Federal, State, and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities, and with agencies and organizations that focus on vocational rehabilitation and work-related training and counseling, including DOL One-Stop Career Centers.

In order to be considered for an award, applicants must describe:

- Their understanding of benefits planning and assistance, including the benefits programs with which they have worked in the past;

- How they will notify all SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities in Wyoming about benefits planning and assistance and provide those services to beneficiaries;

- Their understanding of outreach, and how they will conduct outreach to all SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities (and their families) in Wyoming who are potentially eligible to participate in Federal or State work incentives programs designed to assist beneficiaries with disabilities to work, and, particularly, how the outreach strategies, information, and materials will be modified to seek out different ethnic and racial groups;

- The scope of the project; and

- How that project achieves the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program goals in Part I, Section D.

The applicants must also describe how they will address any special cultural requirements of populations (*e.g.*, Native Americans) within the targeted geographic area, as well as non-English speaking populations (*e.g.*, Vietnamese) and SSI recipients as young as age 14.

In providing benefits planning and assistance services, and conducting outreach, projects must be sensitive to issues such as cultural differences and non-English speaking populations within the areas they serve (*e.g.*, Native

Americans, Vietnamese). Specifically, projects must address the needs of underserved individuals with disabilities from diverse ethnic and racial communities and show how they intend to provide outreach in ways that ensure interaction with diverse communities. (SSA awarded a contract to the University of Montana to provide technical assistance on Native American cultural and tribal considerations to Benefits Specialists in the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach program.)

Applicants must also provide information on:

- Collaborative relationships with relevant agencies, including SSA's field offices, and organizations (*e.g.*, Centers for Independent Living, DOL One-Stop Career Centers);

- Specific services and supports that will be involved in the project and their roles;

- Case management and monitoring systems and techniques to be used (*see* <http://www.ssa.gov/work/BPAO/bpao.html> for further information regarding an available case management system for Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach projects);

- Methods of evaluating benefits planning, assistance, and outreach provided; and

- The MI and quality assurance process that will be used.

Applicants must also describe how Benefits Specialists will be trained on numerous supports which are often used by people with disabilities, such as long-term care, subsidized housing, paratransit, and food stamps; variations in benefits and services in Wyoming; Wyoming's work incentives programs; workers' compensation and unemployment insurance programs; vocational rehabilitation services; work-related training and counseling programs; and other community-based support programs designed to enable people with disabilities to work.

Applicants must also describe how Benefits Specialists will be trained to conduct outreach by providing information, guidance, and planning to beneficiaries with disabilities on the:

- Availability and interrelation of any Federal or State work incentives programs designed to assist beneficiaries with disabilities for which the individual may be eligible to participate;

- Adequacy of any health benefits coverage that may be offered by an employer of the individual and the extent to which other health benefits coverage may be available to the individual; and