

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Administration for Children and Families

#### Notice of Public Comment on the Proposed Adoption of ANA Program Policies and Procedures

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 814 of the Native American Programs Act of 1974, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2991b-1, the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) herein describes its proposed interpretive rules, general statements of policy and rules of agency procedure or practice relating to the Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS), Language Preservation and Maintenance (hereinafter referred to as Native Language), and Environmental Regulatory Enhancement (hereinafter referred to as Environmental) programs. Under the statute, ANA is required to provide members of the public an opportunity to comment on proposed changes in interpretive rules, statements of general policy, and rule of agency procedure or practice and to give notice of the final adoption of such changes at least 30 days before the changes become effective. The notice also provides additional information about ANA's plans for administering these programs.

**DATES:** The deadline for receipt of comments is November 28, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments in response to this notice should be addressed to Sheila Cooper, Director of Program Operations, Administration for Native Americans, 370, L'Enfant Promenade, SW., Mail Stop: Aerospace 8—West, Washington, DC 20447. Delays may occur in mail delivery to Federal offices; therefore, a copy of comments should also be faxed to: (202) 690-7441. Comments will be available for inspection by members of the public at Administration for Native Americans, Aerospace Center, 901 D Street SW., Washington, DC 20447.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Sheila Cooper, 202-690-7732.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Section 814 of the Native American Programs Act of 1974, (the Act), as amended, requires the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to provide notice of its proposed interpretive rules, statements of policy and rule of agency organization, procedure or practice. These proposed clarifications and modifications will appear in the FY 2004 SEDS Program Announcement and the announcements for the Native Language and Environmental programs. This notice and the draft ANA SEDS Program Announcement, which is part

of this notice, serve to fulfill this requirement.

#### Additional Information

##### 1. Policy on Deadline Date for Applications

For FY 2004, ANA will have one closing date for the SEDS Program or other special initiative undertaken pursuant to section 803(a) of the Native American Programs Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. 2991b and one closing date each for the Alaska SEDS Program, Native Language program, and the Environmental program. (*Legal authority: Sections 803 (a) and (d) and 803C of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2991b and 2991b-3*)

##### 2. Receipt of Applications

ANA's program announcements will now require that all applications for funding be "received by" the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) by the closing date. Consistent with past practices, ANA will not acknowledge receipt of applications. Previously, ANA accepted applications for funding if they were postmarked on or before the closing date. The change to receipt of the application by the closing date is expected to reduce disputes regarding postmarks and late-arriving applications. This change will also ensure ANA has the appropriate number of skilled peer panel reviewers available to review submitted applications. Applications received after the published closing date as stipulated in the published announcement will not be considered. The new program announcement closing schedules will allow ANA to release all funding to communities earlier in the fiscal year; provide applicants additional time to receive agency comments and seek free technical assistance before the next competition in the program. Additionally, ANA grantees will have the opportunity to implement projects in a timely manner; recruit personnel to support the grantee's objectives; and decrease the number of requests for no cost grant extensions. This modification will afford ANA the opportunity to perform grant administration and program monitoring and evaluation activities that support new and non-competing continuation grants. (*Legal authority: Sections 803 (a) and (d) and 803C of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2991b and 2991b-3*)

##### 3. Access to Program Announcement and Application Materials

The program announcement and the application materials are available on the ANA website at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ana>. The material on the website is provided as information only. ANA makes all reasonable efforts to assure that the Website is complete and accurate. The applicant bears sole responsibility, to assure that the copy downloaded and/or printed from any source is accurate and complete. In case of a conflict between the content of material downloaded from the web site and the material appearing in the **Federal Register**, the notice published in the **Federal Register** shall take precedence. (*Legal authority: Sections 803 (a) and (d) and 803C of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2991b and 2991b-3*)

##### 4. Application Submission Requirements

The format of the application for funding is now standardized. The new application format will help applicants focus on the type of information and data required to support an application for funding. ANA will implement a page limitation requirement to enable a thorough review of the application. (See 4 (a) and (b)). ANA will implement these page requirements with a limit on the number of pages for each section. These modifications to the announcement will reduce the amount of documentation applicants need to submit and it will both strengthen and streamline the peer panel review process to allow reviewers to focus on the project and application content. Additionally, program announcement standardization will prepare ANA and applicants for the Federal Government's Electronic Grant Application submission initiative and process. (*Legal authority: Sections 803 (a) and (d) and 803C of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2991b and 2991b-3*)

4. (a) Organization and Preparation of Application: Due to the intensity and pace of the application review and evaluation process, ANA has standardized the application submission format. The new application submission format for the SEDS program is included in this notice.

4. (b) ANA Application Format: ANA will now require all applications to be labeled with a Section Heading in compliance with the format provided in the program announcement. This format applies to all applicants submitting applications for funding in the programs