

Agency: Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Program Office: Administration for Native Americans (ANA)

BACKGROUND

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, the Administration for Native Americans increased the efficiency of its program operations by automating program functions and the panel review process. ANA has also updated and restructured the FY 2004 Program Announcements to expand project opportunities for Native American communities and partners.

PURPOSE FOR EFFICIENCIES

The needs of Native American communities have changed. The new ANA program announcements recognize current community trends and broaden the scope and opportunities for Native American social, economic, language and environmental projects.

BENEFIT

The new FY 2004 ANA Program Announcements: (1) will now provide options to complement other HHS and ACF programs and highlight opportunities for new community-based projects; (2) are designed to clarify the application submission and review process; (3) encourages community-based organizations to apply; and (4) supports Tribes and Native organizations that require seed capital to increase program delivery or organizational capacity development necessary to support and meet the needs of our Native children and families.

THE FY 2004 PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The ANA FY 2004 Program Announcements will now be goal and category specific. For example, under the Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) announcement, ANA will only accept applications for economic, social, and governance projects. Applications submitted under the SEDS announcement that propose Language Preservation and Maintenance or Environmental Regulatory Enhancement projects, or components thereof, will not be eligible for funding under the SEDS program. Instead, ANA will release separate program announcements for funding opportunities for Language Preservation and Maintenance and the Environmental Regulatory Enhancement grant programs.
- In order to clarify the three (3) inter-related goals of the ANA SEDS program, ANA has now reserved the Governance category specifically for Tribal and Village government activities; such as community-based social and economic development code, ordinance, policy development and constitutional reform. Non-profit organizations may now submit organizational capacity development projects under the SEDS social development category.

STANDARDIZED APPLICATION SUBMISSION

- The new ANA Program Announcement now requires that ANA receive all applications no later than the closing date stated in the announcement. Previously, ANA allowed

applications to be postmarked by the closing date. This modification will eliminate disputes regarding postmarks and late-arriving applications. It will also ensure ANA has the appropriate number of skilled reviewers available to review submitted applications.

- The format of the ANA application for funding is now standardized. The new application format will help applicants focus on the type of information and data required to support projects and program Areas of Interest. In FY 2004, ANA will implement a page limitation to assist applicants and the peer panel review process. This modification to the announcement will reduce the amount of documentation and will strengthen and streamline the review process by allowing reviewers to more readily focus on the project and application content. Additionally, program announcement standardization will prepare applicants for the Federal Electronic Grant Application submission (E-grants) initiative and process.

ANA PROGRAM AREAS OF INTEREST COMPLEMENT ACF AND HHS PROGRAMS

- The Administration for Children and Families supports and fosters strong families and healthy communities. In the FY 2004 Program Announcement, ANA has identified program Areas of Interest to complement other HHS and ACF programs. For example, under Social Development, ANA's program Areas of Interest support families, elders, youth development, healthy marriage, and individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, under Governance, ANA funding may be used for leadership and management training or to assist eligible applicants in the development of laws, regulations, codes, policies, and practices that support and promote community based activities. ANA's Economic Development program Areas of Interest support activities that will provide business and employment options and opportunities necessary to build the foundation of healthy communities and strong families.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- In compliance with our governing statute, ANA will begin to collect quantitative data to track social and economic development projects. This data will be used to inform Congress and the public on the effectiveness, success, and impact that ANA programs have in Native American communities and on behalf of Native American families. The new Program Announcement offers applicants the opportunity to choose from a list of six performance indicators. Three indicators may be selected from a list in the program announcement, and two performance indicators may be provided by the grantee to track the specific results and benefits the applicant expects from the funded project. Examples of performance indicators are: the number of people to complete training; the number of children, youth and families served; the number of businesses created or expanded; the number of jobs created, and the implementation of Tribal Codes and Ordinances.

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT CLARIFICATIONS

- In the FY 2004 Program Announcement, ANA clarifies many areas that have previously prompted numerous questions from applicants. The ANA Program Announcement will now include definitions for the following terms: Community, Community Involvement,

Consortia, Economic Development, Governance, Implementation Plan, In-Kind Contributions, Letter of Commitment, Leveraged Resources, Partnerships, Performance Indicators, Sustainable Project, and Social Development.

- An important clarification to note: ANA will accept applications from multiple organizations in the same geographic area. Previously, under each competitive program area, ANA accepted one application that served or impacted a reservation, Tribe or Native American community. The reason for this modification is to expand and support large Native American rural and urban communities and organizations that provide a variety of services in the same geographic area. Although Tribes are limited to three simultaneous ANA grants (SEDS, Language and Environmental) at any one time, this clarification allows other community based organizations to apply for ANA funding, provided the objectives and activities do not duplicate currently funded projects serving the same geographic area.

CONSOLIDATION OF PROGRAM COMPETITIONS

- In FY 2004, ANA will release three separate program announcements (one for SEDS including Alaska SEDS, one for Language Preservation and Maintenance, and one for Environmental Regulatory Enhancement). Each announcement will have one closing date. Previously, ANA had two to three competitions per fiscal year for SEDS, one for Language, and one for Environmental Regulatory Enhancement. The announcement-closing schedule will allow ANA to release all funding to communities earlier in the fiscal year. It will also provide additional time for applicants to receive technical assistance training in project development and application preparation. In addition, it will allow ANA grantees the opportunity to implement programs and projects in a timely manner, recruit personnel necessary to support the grantee's objectives, and decrease the number of requests for grant extensions. This consolidation will decrease the administrative costs associated with multiple closings, increase funding available to grantees by approximately \$250,000, and allow ANA the opportunity to adequately administer its grant portfolio.

Closing Date for Environmental Regulatory Enhancement is April 6, 2004.

Closing Date for Native Language Preservations and Maintenance is April 2, 2004.

Closing Date for Social and Economic Development Strategies including the Alaska SEDS program is April 23, 2004.

THE PEER PANEL REVIEW PROCESS

- ANA is required by statute to provide a peer panel review for each eligible application. Panel reviewers are selected nationally for their education, experience, and working knowledge in ANA program areas. In FY 2003, ANA began the process of expanding and rotating the pool of panel reviewers. This process will ensure that applications for funding are reviewed, analyzed, and scored by qualified professionals in the respective program area. This organizational efficiency will ensure that each application receives appropriate consideration and the panel review teams have the appropriate and necessary credentials to analyze, evaluate, and score applications. For example, readers with education and work experience in Environmental Regulatory Enhancement will be selected to review

environmental applications. Readers with education and work experience in Language Preservation and Maintenance will be selected to review language applications.

- In FY 2003, ANA improved the format of the panel review process. Previously, ANA required panel reviewers to limit their comments and focus on whether each application met the requisite technical areas. This improved process clarifies the role of panel reviewers in how they analyze applications and projects in accordance with the review criteria and the program Areas of Interest. This process will also provide denied applicants with detailed panel review comments on the strengths and the areas to improve in their application, obtain appropriate technical assistance, and correct the deficiencies necessary for resubmission.
- In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and in accordance with the ACF Electronic Grant Application Submission Initiative, in FY 2003 ANA began the process of automating its application receipt and panel review process. The automation of document management has led to more efficiency in program operations. Now, when an application is submitted to ANA it is logged into an automated system and given an identification number. After the Program Announcement closing date ANA randomly assigns each application to a peer review panel for evaluation and scoring. During the review process, panel reviewer comments are downloaded into data files. These comments are then matched and stored with the application data file. By matching the comments and data files with the application, ANA will be able to provide immediate feedback to unsuccessful applicants, negating the need and time to submit a Freedom of Information Act request for panel comments. This process protects the confidentiality of the panel reviewers and allows applicants to obtain comments in a timely manner. This automated process also ensures that ANA will not fund an applicant for the same objectives and activities that may have been funded in prior years.

NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE

- The preservation of native languages is important to ANA's constituency. The new ANA Language Preservation and Maintenance program announcement will increase the Category I Planning Grant ceiling from \$60,000 to \$100,000, and the Category II Design and Implementation grants from \$150,000 to \$175,000. This increase in program funding will support the effective assessment of native languages and provide applicants the opportunity to incorporate new technologies in the assessment and design, implementation and preservation of Native languages and culture.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES PROGRAM

- Due to the demand for ANA project funding, the clarification of the definition for "community" and the expanded project opportunities to be offered under the new ANA FY 2004 SEDS program announcement, ANA will limit the annual budget period project funding to \$500,000. The benefit of this change will result in the award of approximately twenty new grants per fiscal year under the SEDS program.

APPLICATION AND SCORING PROCESS

- In the FY 2004 Program Announcement, ANA will improve the competitive review process through the use of six criteria. Based on the ACF Uniform Project Description, ANA's criteria categories are: Project Introduction; Objectives and Need for Assistance; Project Approach; Organizational Capacity; Results and Benefits Expected (with Performance Indicators); and the Budget Justification. This improvement will standardize the review of each application and distribute the number of points more equitably.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- In FY 2004 ANA will redirect the manner in which Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) is provided to applicants. ANA will now provide project development training, and standardize the T&TA curriculum in all regions. In addition, T&TA providers will now offer more training sessions in areas with large rural and urban Native American populations and communities. All training will be advertised in advance and posted on the ANA website. All potential ANA applicants are eligible to receive T&TA in the SEDS, Language, or Environmental program areas.

COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS

- ANA's FY 2004 Program Announcements will emphasize community-based, locally designed projects. This emphasis will increase the number of grants to local community organizations and expand the number of partnerships among community based non-profit organizations.

WEB SITE INFORMATION

- In FY 2004, ANA's website will now include details of successful applications, such as the name of the applicant, a synopsis of the project and the grant award amount. It will also highlight successful ANA grantees and community based partnerships, provide links to other funding sources, and information on HHS, ACF and ANA special initiatives, and provide the T&TA calendar for training dates and locations. Posting this information will provide prospective applicants with examples of successfully funded projects and it will allow ANA to share grant award information with other ACF offices, and federal and state agencies.