

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Office of Community Services (OCS) is publishing its first program announcement that pulls together six of its Discretionary Funds Programs in one source. The Office of Community Services is committed to coordinating resources available to build strong families and build healthy communities. Through this consolidated announcement, OCS aims to help States, local governments, faith and community-based organizations and other eligible applicants to understand how OCS programs can be coordinated and linked with other resources to achieve meaningful and lasting results.

This announcement describes Fiscal Year 2003 program requirements, application procedures, and deadlines for the following OCS programs:

1. Assets for Independence Demonstration Program
2. Community Economic Development Program
3. Community Food and Nutrition Program
4. Family Violence Prevention and Services Program – Discretionary Funds Program
5. Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals
6. Training, Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building Program

These OCS programs promote individuals, strong families, healthy communities and effective service delivery systems.

## **INDIVIDUALS**

OCS supports projects that enable low-income individuals and others to be self-sufficient and maximize their contributions to the growth and stability of their community.

## **STRONG FAMILIES**

OCS funds Tribal, local, State, and faith-based and community efforts that strengthen family structure and well-being. The Office will support national, State, Tribal, local, faith-based and community programs that:

- Encourage building strong family foundations, including helping form and maintain healthy marriages in which both parents take responsibility for raising and nurturing their children. OCS places specific emphasis on efforts that emphasize the role of fathers. It will likewise stress projects that enhance family stability and safety through domestic violence prevention, intervention, and protective services.
- Promote a continuum of services for low-income individuals and families that enable them to move from public assistance to employment and promote their longer-term ability to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.
- Support opportunities for low-income individuals and families to accumulate sufficient assets to take a major step toward economic independence (this may include, for example, opening a small business, pursuing higher education, or owning/building a home).

## **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

This announcement describes a number of funding opportunities for eligible applicants who are working to build communities that support family growth and well-being. OCS programs will:

- Seek to assure that the broadest base of community resources and supports are made available to low-income families and individuals, including those from faith-based and community organizations.
- Support the creation of community support systems that help families become strong and self-sufficient. This includes job and business opportunities, food and nutrition programs, and family violence prevention and services.
- Promote participation of low-income residents in community governance and activities, and advocacy for sustained community supports that build strong, self-sufficient families.

## **EFFECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEMS**

OCS will support projects through this announcement that increase the capacity of State, Tribal, local, faith and community-based organizations to produce meaningful family and community outcomes. OCS funding will:

- Continue to advance the implementation of Results Oriented Management and Accountability Performance Management System among State and local agencies that comprise the Community Services Network.
- Enhance service capacity in vulnerable rural, urban and Tribal communities.

- Encourage strategic linkages and partnerships among programs and service organizations to achieve complete family development and community-building goals.

OCS recognizes that its programs alone are not sufficient in either scope or size to achieve fundamental and lasting improvement in the lives of low-income families and their communities. To that end, OCS is currently establishing new partnerships and linkages with other Federal programs and agencies and philanthropic organizations that share the family community-building mission.

Similarly, OCS encourages States, Tribes, faith and community-based organizations to coordinate the various programs and services that are needed to help families and communities out of poverty. Please note that each OCS Discretionary Grant Program described in this announcement emphasizes program linkages and partnerships. Indeed, OCS will give priority to applications that propose projects that are part of a broader strategy for strengthening families or building stronger communities.