DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

Grants for Short-Term Policy Research on Welfare Outcomes (ASPE), Notice Inviting Applications for New Award for Fiscal Year 1999

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS.

ACTION: Announcement of the availability of funds and request for applications for short-term policy research.

SUMMARY: The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) announces the availability of funds and invites applications for short-term policy research. We anticipate that between 4 and 7 entities will receive funding. We do not anticipate any new data collection under this grant but rather secondary analysis of existing data.

CLOSING DATE: The closing date for submitting applications under this announcement is July 26, 1999.

MAILING ADDRESS: Application instructions and forms should be requested from and submitted to: Adrienne Little, Grants Officer, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 405F, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Washington, DC 20201, Telephone: (202) 690-8794.

Requests for forms and administrative questions will be accepted and responded to up to 10 working days prior to closing date of receipt of applications.

Copies of this program announcement and many of the required forms may also be obtained electronically at the ASPE World Wide Web Page: http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov (see section on available grants and contracts).

Application submissions may not be faxed or submitted electronically.

The printed Federal Register notice is the only official program announcement. Although reasonable efforts are taken to assure that the files on the ASPE World Wide Web Page containing electronic copies of this Program Announcement are accurate and complete, they are provided for information only. The applicant bears sole responsibility to assure that the copy downloaded and/or printed from any other source is accurate and complete.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Administrative questions should be directed to the Grants Officer at the address or phone number listed above. Technical questions should be directed to Audrey Mirsky-Ashby, DHHS, ASPE, Telephone, 202-401-6640 or e-mail, amirsky@osaspe.dhhs.gov. Written technical questions may also be faxed to 202-690-6562 or may be addressed to Ms. Audrey Mirsky-Ashby at the following address. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 405E, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Washington, DC 20201. Please call Ms. Audrey Mirsky-Ashby to confirm receipt.

Part I. Supplementary Information

Legislative Authority

This grant is authorized by section 1110 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1310) and awards will be made from funds appropriated under Pub. L. 105-277, Department of Health and Human Services Appropriations Act, 1999.

Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to section 1110 of the Social Security Act, any public and private nonprofit organizations including universities and other institutions of higher education may apply. Applications may also be submitted by for-profit organizations. However, no grant funds may be paid as profit, i.e., any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs of the recipient (45 CFR 74.705).

Available Funds

Approximately $550,000 is available from ASPE, in funds appropriated for fiscal year 1999. ASPE anticipates providing between 4 and 7 awards with award amounts ranging from $75,000 to $150,000. No awards greater than $150,000 will be made. If additional funding becomes available in fiscal years 1999 or 2000, additional projects may be funded. No federal funds received as a result of this announcement can be used to purchase computer equipment.

Background

The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) brought about fundamental changes in our nation's income support program for needy families with children. Welfare reform was expected to alter individuals' behavior in regard to work, marriage, fertility and program participation. As part of PRWORA, the
Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program was replaced by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program to states. Under TANF, states were given considerable flexibility to design and implement their support programs for needy families with children. In addition to this increased flexibility, TANF ended the individual entitlement to cash assistance, imposed a 60 month lifetime limit on the receipt of assistance and conditioned assistance on participation in work related activities.

Between January 1993 and December 1998, the number of people receiving federally funded assistance under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act fell from 14.1 million to just under 8 million recipients, a reduction of 44 percent. This decline has occurred partly in response to the strong economy, the Administration’s grants of Federal waivers to 43 States, and the provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

In response to the demand from the public and policymakers there is a broad array of research being conducted regarding the outcomes of welfare reform. While we are learning a lot about the employment and earnings of those who leave welfare, we know little about outcomes in other domains, such as child well-being or family structure, and we know very little about low-income families who do not come on to the welfare rolls. We also know little about subgroups with specific employment barriers.

There is solid and consistent evidence from a variety of sources that welfare reform has increased the average employment and earnings of welfare recipients. Experimental studies of State waiver demonstrations and other work programs that are very similar to TANF programs show consistently positive impacts on employment and earnings. Recent results from specific State programs show employment increases in the range of about 7 to 29 percent, and earnings increases of about 16 to 27 percent. For example, in the evaluation of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), earnings for single-parent long-term recipients in urban counties increased by $1,041 (26.9 percent), and the percent ever employed increased by 17.0 percentage points (28.8 percent) over 18 months.

Analyses of data from the Census Bureau’s annual Current Population Survey (CPS) indicate a clear pattern of increased employment. The March employment rate of previous-year AFDC adult recipients increased from 19 to 25 percent between 1992 and 1996, and jumped to almost 32 percent in 1997. Also, the March employment rate of single mothers whose previous-year income was under 200 percent of poverty rose from 44 percent in 1992 to 54 percent in 1997, with average annual increases in 1996 and 1997 twice as large as in the previous 3 years.

The evidence about impacts on family income, on food security and hunger, on health insurance status, on child outcomes, and on other family experiences, are much less clear at this point. The best reading of the available evidence suggests that most families exiting welfare continue to be poor. Further, while some families are benefitting dramatically from the new incentives, requirements and opportunities, others are being left behind. However, preliminary evidence from states does not support the hypotheses that large numbers of people are becoming homeless or that more children are being moved into foster care as a result of welfare reform policies.

A recent analysis of the effects of welfare reform on Medicaid coverage, published by Families USA, found using data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and from the Health Care Financing Administration, found that over two-thirds of a million low-income people—approximately 675,000—lost Medicaid coverage and became uninsured as of 1997 due to welfare reform. The majority (62 percent) of those who became uninsured due to welfare reform were children. Results from waiver demonstrations and studies of recipients who left welfare ("leaver" studies) for the most part indicate that average family income has been unchanged with some families increasing their income but others experiencing declines. For example, 2-year impacts on clients assessed as "job-ready" from Indiana’s waiver demonstration showed earnings up 17.0 percent ($1,374) and quarters of employment up 12.8 percent, but total combined income from earnings and benefits was unchanged.

There is some early evidence that the most disadvantaged families may be losing incomes. CPS data indicate that real average family income for the bottom quintile of female-headed families with children declined between 1995 and 1997, after increasing from 1993 to 1995.

Part II. Purpose and Responsibilities

Purpose

The purpose of these grants is to support policy relevant research to complement ongoing research and evaluations on the outcomes of welfare reform, and to broaden our understanding of the outcomes of welfare reform. These grants are meant to supplement other leavers grants that ASPE has previously funded (see the web site at http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hspsisp/98grants.htm for a description of these grants). These grants are to support short-term research and data analysis efforts that are designed to be completed within twelve months. ASPE hopes to support efforts to analyze a variety of information about individuals (adults and children) and their families, including their economic and non-economic well-being and their participation in government programs. We hope to gain some understanding of the broader issues of the labor market and individual behaviors such as the differential effects of the business cycle on subgroups of the eligible population. The identification of important subgroups such as rural residents, individuals with significant barriers to success (e.g., mental illness, domestic violence, substance abuse, illiteracy, people with disabilities) and analyses of outcomes for these groups is also encouraged. Analyses that focus on differential outcomes by race/ethnicity are also encouraged. In addition, while average effects or outcomes are important it is also important in the context of welfare reform to look at the distribution of the outcomes, to identify and understand the winners and losers, and to understand the reasons why some individuals are winners and others are losers. Thus researchers are encouraged to look beyond averages.

Our intent is to sponsor analytic work and not to fund the provision of services. While research may be conducted in service settings, proposals of this nature will be carefully scrutinized to assure that these funds are not used for non-research purposes, no matter how worthwhile.

ASPE is interested in exploring research associated with three welfare related populations: (1) Those who are eligible for welfare but do not enroll either due to diversion programs or simply to failure to apply or enroll; (2) program participants and (3) program leavers. ASPE is interested in analyses that could inform the design of and questions. While the list represents some of the many topics that are important to ASPE researchers and...
policymakers, the suggested questions are in no way meant to be exhaustive.

Participation Decisions/Entry and Exit

How do program participation decisions and the outcomes for those who do not enroll in the TANF assistance program either because they are diverted from the program or choose not to apply or enroll differ vis-a-vis those who do enroll? How does this relate to decisions to participate in related support programs such as Food Stamps and Medicaid?

What are the effects of welfare reform on program entry and exit and on the composition of the caseload? For example, does welfare reform effect on the number of mothers on the rolls with young children? What role, if any, do other supports including public and private transfers (e.g., child support payments; work supports (e.g., Medicaid, child care, transportation); and social and community supports play in the decision to participate in or leave TANF? What role do these supports play in achieving success outside the TANF assistance program for those who do not enter TANF and/or those who leave the assistance program?

Business Cycle Effects

What are the business cycle effects, as experienced on the regional level, on entry and exit from TANF and how are different groups (e.g., those experiencing barriers to success) impacted?

Impacts on Well-Being

What are the differential impacts of participation or non-participation on individual and family well-being? How is welfare reform affecting the experiences of program participants and their outcomes including economic and non-economic well-being? How are the children of low income and welfare families faring under welfare reform on measures such as school achievement, behavioral problems, and health status? What facilitates positive outcomes or success? What effect has the increased focus on work and responsibility had on the children of low income and welfare families?

Self-Sufficiency Timeline

How quickly can we expect welfare recipients to become self-sufficient? Can welfare recipients accumulate sufficient skills to move forward in the labor market and increase their earnings to a level to meet basic needs and beyond? Are there groups that will be left behind? What strategies would enable those hard-to-serve recipients to move successfully into the labor market?

Individuals Who Leave the Rolls With No Earnings

Many of those who leave the welfare rolls are leaving for work but many also leave for non-work reasons. Little is known about this group—where do they turn for support—family, friends, other support systems? How effective and/or stable are these supports? How are they and their children faring?

Grantee Responsibilities

1. No later than ninety (90) days after the date of award, the Grantee shall submit an outline of progress to date. This progress report should note any changes to the work plan. The grantee shall provide concise, quarterly progress reports with format and content to be provided by the Federal Project Office.

2. After completing the analysis, the Grantee shall prepare a final report describing the results of the study, including the procedures and methodology used to conduct the analysis, the research questions answered, the knowledge and information gained from the project, and any barriers encountered in completing the project. A draft of this report shall be delivered to the Federal Project Officer no later than thirty (30) days before the completion of the project. After receiving comments on the draft report from the Federal Project Officer, the Grantee shall deliver at least three (3) copies of a final report to the Grants Officer before the completion of the project. One of these copies must be unbound, suitable for photocopying.

ASPE Responsibilities

1. ASPE shall provide consultation in the planning and operation of grant activities.

2. ASPE shall aid in information exchange and the dissemination of reports to appropriate Federal, State, and local entities.

Part III. Application Preparation and Evaluation Criteria

This section contains information on the preparation of applications for submission under this announcement, the forms necessary for submission, and the evaluation criteria under which the applications will be reviewed. Potential grant applicants should read this section carefully in conjunction with the information provided above. The application must contain the required Federal forms, title page, table of contents, and sections listed below. All pages of the narrative should be numbered.

The application should include the following elements:

1. Abstract: A one page summary of the proposed project.

2. Goals and objective of the project: An overview that describes the need for the proposed project; indicates the background and policy significance of the issue area(s) to be researched; outlines the specific quantitative and qualitative questions to be investigated; and clearly describes how the proposed project will advance scientific knowledge and policy development. If the proposal builds on any current project, the application should describe how funding under this announcement will enhance, not substitute for, current efforts.

3. Methodology and Design: Provide a description and justification of how the proposed research project will be implemented, including methodologies, chosen approach, definition of study populations, data sources, key variables and research plan and analytic plans. In addition, provide evidence of access to database(s) proposed to be studied.

To the extent that the analysis uses data on individuals from multiple, separate sources, such as administrative databases from several State agencies, the proposal should discuss measures taken to maintain confidentiality, as well as demonstrate that the Grantee has obtained authorized access to those data sources. The preferred form of proof is a signed agreement with each of the relevant agencies/departments. Though not preferable, letters of support from the appropriate agencies are acceptable, provided that the letter clearly states that the proposing agency has the authorization to access and link all necessary data. Grant applicants must assure that the collected data will only be used for management and research purposes, and that all identifying information will be kept completely confidential.

4. Experience, capacity, qualifications, and use of staff: Briefly describe the grant applicant's organizational capabilities and experience in conducting pertinent research projects. Identify key staff who are expected to carry out the research project and provide a curriculum vitae or resume for each person. Provide a brief discussion of how key staff will contribute to the success of the project.

5. Work plan: A work plan should be included which lists the start and end dates of the project, a time line which indicates the sequence of tasks necessary for the completion of the project, and the responsibilities of each of the key staff. The plan should identify the time commitments of key...
staff members in both absolute and percentage terms, including other projects and teaching or managerial responsibilities. The work plan should include a discussion of any plans for dissemination of the results of the study, e.g., articles in journals and presentations at conferences.

6. Budget: Grant applicants must submit a request for federal funds using Standard Form 424A and include a detailed breakdown of all Federal line items. A narrative explanation of the budget should be included that states clearly how the funds associated with this announcement will be used and describes the extent to which funds will be used for purposes that would not otherwise be incorporated within the project. The applicant should budget for one trip to Washington, DC to discuss results of the research. Cost sharing-matching is a mandatory requirement under this award. Applicants must demonstrate the amount and details of the cost-sharing-matching arrangement. If the proposal entails funding from any additional sources, the applicant should also document the level of funding and describe how these funds will be expended.

Review Process and Funding Information

Applications will initially be screened for compliance with the timeliness and completeness requirements. Three (3) copies of each application are required. One of these copies must be in an unbound format, suitable for copying. If only one of the copies is the original (i.e., carries the original signature and is accompanied by a cover letter) it should not be this copy. Applicants are encouraged to send an additional two (2) copies to ease processing, but the application will not be penalized if these extra copies are not included. The grant applicant's Standard Form 424 must be signed a representative of the applicant who is authorized to act with full authority on behalf of the applicant.

A Federal review panel will review and score all applications submitted by the deadline date that meet the screening criteria (all information and documents as required by this announcement.) The panel will use the evaluation criteria listed below to score each application. The panel results will be the primary element used by the ASPE when making funding decisions. The Department reserves the option to discuss applications with other Federal or State staff, specialists, experts and the general public. Comments from these sources, along with those of the reviewers, will be kept from inappropriate disclosure and may be considered in making an award decision.

As a result of this competition between 4 and 7 grants averaging between $75,000 and $150,000 each are expected to be made from funds appropriated for fiscal year 1999. Additional awards may be made depending on the policy relevance of proposals received and the available funding, including funds that may become available in fiscal years 1999 or 2000.

Reports

As noted in the Grantee Responsibilities, one substantive report is required under the grant: a final report containing all results and analysis (draft version due no later than thirty (30) days before the end of the project and final version due at the conclusion of the project).

In addition, Grantees shall provide concise quarterly progress reports. The specific format and content for these reports will be provided by the Federal Project Officer.

State Single Point of Contact (E.O. No. 12372)

DHHS has determined that this program is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants are not required to seek intergovernmental review of their applications within the constraints of E.O. 12372.

Deadline for Submission of Applications

The closing date for submission of applications under this announcement is July 26, 1999. Hand-delivered applications will be accepted Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays, during the working hours of 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the lobby of the Hubert H. Humphrey building, located at 200 Independence Avenue, SW in Washington, DC. When hand-delivering an application, call (202) 690-8794 from the lobby for pick up. A staff person will be available to receive applications. An application will be considered as having met the deadline if it is either received at, or hand-delivered to, the mailing address or before July 26, 1999, or postmarked before midnight three days prior to July 26, 1999, and received in time to be considered during the competitive review process.

When mailing applications, applicants are strongly advised to obtain a legibly dated receipt from the U.S. Postal Service or from a commercial carrier (such as UPS, Federal Express, etc.) as proof of mailing by the deadline date. If there is a question as to when an application was mailed, applicants will be asked to provide proof of mailing by the deadline date. If proof cannot be provided, the application will not be considered for funding. Private metered postmarks will not be accepted as proof of timely mailing. Applications which do not meet the deadline will be considered late applications and will not be considered or reviewed in the current competition. DHHS will send a letter to this effect to each late applicant.

DHHS reserves the right to extend the deadline for all proposals due to: (1) Natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes, or earthquakes; (2) a widespread disruption of the mail; or, (3) if DHHS determines a deadline extension to be in the best interest of the Federal government. The Department will not waive or extend the deadline for any applicant unless the deadline is waived or extended for all applicants.

Application Forms

Application instructions and forms should be requested from and submitted to: Adrienne Little, Grants Officer, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, Room 405F, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20201. Telephone: (202) 690–8794. Requests for forms and questions (administrative and technical) will be accepted and responded to up to ten (10) working days prior to closing date of receipt of applications.

Copies of this program announcement and many of the required forms may also be obtained electronically at the ASPE World Wide Web Page: http://aspe.hhs.gov (see section on available grants and contracts). You may fax your request to the attention of the Grants Officer at (202) 690–6518. Completed grant applications may not be faxed or submitted electronically.

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Also see section entitled “Components of a Complete Application.” All of these documents must accompany the application package.
Length of Application

In no case shall an application for the ASPE grant (excluding the resumes, appendices and other appropriate attachments) be longer than twenty-five double-spaced pages. Only relevant attachments should be included, for example, resumes of key personnel, videotapes, brochures, and other promotional materials will be discarded and not reviewed. Project narratives should be formatted with 1 inch margins, double spaced lines, 12 point type, with consecutively numbered pages.

Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

Selection of successful applicants will be based on the technical and financial criteria described in this announcement. Reviewers will determine the strengths and weaknesses of each application in terms of the evaluation criteria listed below, provide comments, and assign numerical scores. The review panel will prepare a summary of all applicant scores, strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations and submit it to the ASPE for final decisions on the award.

The point value following each criterion heading indicates the maximum numerical weight that each section will be given in the review process. An unacceptable rating on any individual criterion may render the application unacceptable. Consequently, grant applicants should take care to ensure that all criteria are fully addressed in the applications. Grant applications will be reviewed as follows:

1. Goals, Objectives, and Potential Usefulness of the Analyses (25 points). The potential usefulness of the objectives and how the anticipated results of the proposed project will advance policy knowledge and development of welfare reform policies. If the proposed project builds on previous work, the application should explain how. If the project uses pre-TANF data, the application should explain both the value of this data and its limitations data in the post-TANF world. Applications will be judged on the quality and policy relevance of the proposed research questions, study populations, and analyses (including subgroup analyses).

2. Quality and Soundness of Methodology and Design (30 points). The appropriateness, soundness, and cost-effectiveness of the methodology, including the research design, selection of existing data sets, data gathering procedures, statistical techniques, and analytical and modeling strategies. Richness of policy-relevant data and demonstrated ability to secure data will be an important scoring factor in this criterion.

3. Qualifications of Personnel and Organizational Capability. (25 points). The qualifications of the project personnel for conducting the proposed research as evidenced by professional training and experience, and the capacity of the organization to provide the infrastructure and support necessary for the project. Reviewers will evaluate the principal investigator and staff on research experience and demonstrated research skills.

Reviewer may consider references for work completed on prior research projects. Principal investigator and staff time commitments also will be a factor in the evaluation. Reviewers will rate the applicant's pledge and ability to work in collaboration with other scholars or organizations in search of similar goals. Reviewers also will evaluate the applicant's demonstrated capacity to work with a range of government agencies.

4. Ability of the Work Plan and Budget to Successfully Achieve the Project's Objectives. (20 points). Reviewers will examine if the work plan and budget are reasonable and sufficient to ensure timely implementation and completion of the study and whether the application demonstrates an adequate level of understanding by the applicant of the practical problems of conducting such a project. Adherence to the work plan is necessary in order to produce results in the time frame desired; demonstration of an applicant's ability to meet the schedule will therefore be an important part of this criterion. Evidence of past history in meeting deadlines will be considered. Reviewers will also examine the use of any additional funding and the role that funds provided under this announcement will play in the overall project.

Disposition of Applications

1. Approval, disapproval, or deferral. On the basis of the review of the application, the Assistant Secretary will either (a) approve the application as a whole or in part; (b) disapprove the application; or (c) defer action on the application for such reasons as lack of funds or a need for further review.

2. Notification of disposition. The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation will notify the applicants of the disposition of their applications. If approved, a signed notification of the award will be sent to the business office named in the ASPE checklist.

3. The Assistant Secretary's Discretion. Nothing in this announcement should be construed as to obligate the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation to make any awards whatsoever. Awards and the distribution of awards among the priority areas are contingent on the needs of the Department at any point in time and the quality of the applications that are received.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number is 93–239.

Components of a Complete Application

A complete application consists of the following items in this order:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424);
2. Budget Information—Non-construction Programs (Standard Form 424A);
3. Assurances—Non-construction Programs (Standard Form 424B);
4. Table of Contents;
5. Budget Justification for Section B Budget Categories;
6. Proof of Non-profit Status, if appropriate;
7. Copy of the applicant's Approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if necessary;
8. Project Narrative Statement, organized in five sections, addressing the following topics (limited to thirty (25) single-spaced pages):
   (a) Abstract,
   (b) Goals, Objectives and Usefulness of the Project,
   (c) Methodology and design,
   (d) Background of the Personnel and Organizational Capabilities and
   (e) Work plan (timetable);
9. Any appendices or attachments;
10. Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace;
11. Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, or other Responsibility Matters;
12. Certification and, if necessary, Disclosure Regarding Lobbying;
13. Supplement to Section II—Key Personnel;

Dated: June 3, 1999.

Ann Segal,
Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

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