www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2006-ACF-OCSE-FI-0005.html

Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families

Program Office:	Office of Child Support Enforcement
Funding Opportunity Title:	Special Improvement Project (SIP)
Announcement Type:	Initial
Funding Opportunity Number:	HHS-2006-ACF-OCSE-FI-0005
CFDA Number:	93.601
Due Date for Applications:	**05/24/2006**

Executive Summary:

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), invites eligible applicants to submit competitive grant applications for special improvement projects, which further the national child support mission, vision, and goals. Applications will be screened and evaluated as indicated in this program announcement. Awards will be contingent upon the outcome of the competition and the availability of funds. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, approximately $800,000 is available for all priority areas. A non-Federal match is not required.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Legislative Authority

Legislative Authority: Section 452(j) of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 652(j), provides Federal funds for information dissemination and technical assistance to States, training of Federal and State staff to improve child support programs, and research, demonstration, and special projects of regional or national significance relating to the operation of State child support enforcement programs.

Program Purpose and Objectives. To fund a number of special improvement projects, which further the national child support mission to ensure that all children receive financial and medical support from their parents and which strengthen the ability of the nation's child support programs to collect support on behalf of children and families.

OCSE is looking for innovative projects that promote some of the basic themes of the national strategic plan in that child support should be a reliable source of income for families; and that child support agencies should use early prevention strategies to help build a culture of compliance in which parents will support their children voluntarily and reliably. We invite applications for partnerships with entities such as courts and/or tribunals and community- and

faith-based organizations, which have the ability to address the needs of harder-to-serve populations, such as low-income non-custodial parents and culturally diverse populations. Applicants should understand that OCSE will not award grants for special improvement projects that: (a) duplicate automated data processing and information retrieval system requirements or enhancements and associated tasks that are specified in the Social Security Act; or (b) which cover costs for routine activities that would normally be reimbursed under the Child Support Program (e.g., adding staff positions to perform routine child support enforcement (CSE) tasks), or by other Federal funding sources. Proposals and their accompanying budgets will be reviewed from this perspective.

Over the past five years, OCSE has awarded an average of 11 grants per year, totaling approximately $1.3 million per year. All grant awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. A non-Federal match is not required. The anticipated start date for the new awards is July 3, 2006; projects under Priority 1 may run through June 30, 2010, for a period of up to 48 months; projects under Priority 2 may run through June 30, 2008, for a period of up to 24 months; and projects under Priority 3 may run through June 30, 2009, for a period of up to 36 months.

Given that the purpose of these projects is to improve CSE programs, it is critical that applicants who are not Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (IV-D) agencies have the cooperation of IV-D agencies to operate these projects. In such instances, the Federal OCSE will provide the State CSE agency the opportunity to comment on the merits of local CSE agency applications before final award. Preference will be given to applicants representing CSE agencies and applicant organizations that have letters of commitment or cooperative agreements with CSE agencies. All applications developed jointly by more than one agency/organization must identify a single lead organization as the official applicant. The lead organization will be the recipient of the grant award. Participating agencies and organizations can be included as co-participants, subgrantees, or subcontractors with their written authorization.

On October 21, 2004, OCSE conducted an audio conference call on "Writing a Grant Application Made Easy." The material presented covered major differences between OCSE's Section 1115 and Special Improvement Project (SIP) grant programs, key elements of OCSE's evaluation criteria, and advice on what to include and common mistakes to avoid. It did not cover the details of the published announcement or discuss the specific priority areas. A text version and link to the audio version of that audio conference will be available on the ACF/OCSE web site, searchable at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/.

Priority Area 1:

Promoting Healthy Relationships for Unwed Couples to Improve Children's Financial and Medical Security

Description

A recent study on child support and minorities indicates that only 50 percent of unwed couples who establish paternity at the time of the birth of their child, establish an order for child support after three years. Often, unwed fathers establish paternity in the hospital directly after the birth

of their children. They provide information regarding their residence and basis for payment of the hospital bills. At this time, the couple may intend to marry soon.

Under this solicitation, OCSE is looking for projects that develop and implement innovative strategies that will lead to regular financial and medical support for children while: (a) minimizing the need for adversarial proceedings, or formal administrative or judicial proceedings, or (b) minimizing the need to take formal or punitive actions to collect support that is owed by a noncustodial parent. Strategies might include the applicant agency and/or its partners encouraging voluntary paternity establishment coupled with providing information (and referral services) to unwed parents about the benefits of healthy marriage and the impact on the financial security of children; and/or providing dispute resolution services for low-income parents regarding child support and visitation matters. Projects should develop and demonstrate creative new ways of periodically getting information to the unwed parents and providing effective long-term follow-up with the couple once the parents leave the hospital.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding:	$1,150,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	2
Ceiling on Amount of Individual Awards:	$575,000 per project period
Floor on Amount of Individual Awards:	None
Average Projected Award Amount:	$575,000 per project period
Length of Project Periods:	48-month project with four 12-month budget periods

OCSE is providing a maximum of $200,000 for the first 12-month budget period and a maximum of $125,000 for the three additional 12-month budget periods to provide sufficient time for these projects to finalize activities and evaluation reports. An application that exceeds the upper value of the dollar range specified will be considered non-responsive.

Priority Area 2:

Improving Child Support by Encouraging Parents and CSE Agencies to Work Together for Better Case Management and Results

Description

States report that customer service surveys indicate both custodial parents (CPs) and noncustodial parents (NCPs) often do not provide case-relevant information in a timely matter.

This can result in the setting of inaccurate orders, which, in many cases, is a barrier to collections. On the other hand, there is evidence that agencies may not always respond promptly and accurately to the information provided by NCPs and CPs that can lead to problems such as arrears build-up, undistributed collections, or a shortfall of support.

The presumption is that increased involvement of parents and assurance that agency staff would act quickly on information provided by parents would lead to more accurate orders and collections. Projects would train staff to apply skills and work organization tools that will help workers to consider and approach their customers as partners in the child support process; and provide information to NCPs and CPs in partnering in the progress of their child support cases.

OCSE is looking for innovative strategies for working with parents that are primarily intended to improve performance in key child support measures (found in the National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan) and increase healthy family formation. Projects would demonstrate innovative ways to educate parents about the establishment of parentage and their roles and responsibilities in the CSE process and encourage parents to meet those responsibilities. Approaches could include enhanced websites, better service of process, use of stipulated (voluntary) agreements between both parents on child support and related matters, and education on the benefits of healthy marriage formation and referral to appropriate marriage education services. The projects should fit the demographics of the child support caseload in the area where the project would be conducted.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding:	$300,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	2
Ceiling on Amount of Individual Awards:	$150,000 per project period
Floor on Amount of Individual Awards:	None
Average Projected Award Amount:	$150,000 per project period
Length of Project Periods:	24-month project with two 12-month budget periods

OCSE is providing a maximum of $100,000 for the first 12-month budget period and a maximum of $50,000 for the second 12-month budget period to provide sufficient time for these projects to finalize activities and evaluation reports. An application that exceeds the upper value of the dollar range specified will be considered non-responsive.

Priority Area 3:

Expand and Improve Enforcement/Collection Tools

Description

In this priority area, OCSE invites proposals that develop and/or improve collection and enforcement methods for those orders that are most difficult to enforce. This priority area supports Strategy 10 in the FY 2005-2009 National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan. Strategies may be collaborative in nature and may include creative and innovative methods of enforcing child support orders against obligors who are self-employed, obligors who are part of the underground economy, and/or obligors who may be hiding assets or otherwise evading CSE, perhaps by deliberate unemployment or underemployment. Applicants may also propose projects that tailor enforcement techniques to the obligors' circumstances and record of payment reliability. Strategies could address improvements to current enforcement remedies, such as bank account and asset seizures, passport denial, direct income withholding, filing of liens, or other remedies, in instate or interstate environments.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding:	$300,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	2
Ceiling on Amount of Individual Awards:	$150,000 per project period
Floor on Amount of Individual Awards:	None
Average Projected Award Amount:	$150,000 per project period
Length of Project Periods:	36-month project with three 12-month budget periods

OCSE is providing a maximum of $100,000 for the first 12-month budget period and a maximum of $25,000 for the second and third 12-month budget periods to provide sufficient time for these projects to finalize activities and evaluation reports. An application that exceeds the upper value of the dollar range specified will be considered non-responsive.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

Eligible applicants for these SIP grants are State (including District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) Human Services Umbrella agencies, other State agencies (including State IV-D agencies), Tribes and Tribal Organizations, local public agencies (including IV-D