Arkansas Department of Human Services

Request for Application

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**

**CARES ACT Discretionary Funds Solicitation**

**IMPORTANT DATES**

**Release Date for Application September 14, 2020**

**APPLICATION DUE DATE: September 25, 2020, no later than 4:30 pm**

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**I. Introduction and Background Information**

**A. Overview and Statutory Authority**

Pursuant to authority under §676A(a) of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act, as amended, by the Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training, and Educational Services (Coats) Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998, (Public Law (PL) 105-285), the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Community Services announces that competing applications will be accepted to award the Discretionary portion of FY 2020 and FY 2021 Community Services Block Grant supplemental funds for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES ACT) funds.

Community Services Block Grant is a federal block grant created by Congress in 1981 to alleviate poverty nationwide and empower low-income individuals and families to move from poverty to economic self-sufficiency. In the State of Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Community Services (DHS/DCO/OCS) is responsible for CSBG administration, which includes allocation, distribution, and monitoring of funds.

Under the CSBG Act, the state may utilize five (5) percent of the federal allocation as discretionary funding to support a wide range of activities and programs conducted by community action agencies or other non-profit organizations to eliminate poverty, promote self-sufficiency, and promote community revitalization. Additionally, the funds may be used to provide training and technical assistance for and support coordination and communication among community action agencies.

 The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, 2020, Public Law 116-36, was signed into law on March 27, 2020, providing $1 billion in additional funds to the CSBG program. The funds to states, territories, and tribes authorized under the CSBG Act are intended to address the consequences of increasing unemployment and economic disruption as a result of COVID-19.

CSBG eligible entities–more commonly known as Community Action Agencies (CAAs)–can play a critical role in serving low-income individuals and families in communities, but this will require rapid adaptation of service delivery approaches in close partnership with public health and emergency management professionals within communities. Because the public health response to COVID-19 requires physical and social distancing, an effective immediate response to COVID- 19 will require new ways of organizing and delivering services while maintaining capacity to

help communities in longer-term recovery efforts. (IM 157)

**Community Services Block Grant Purposes and Goals (§672)**

**Purpose**: CSBG funds are appropriated to provide assistance to States and local communities, working through a network of eligible entities), for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient (particularly families who are attempting to transition off a State program carried out under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601 et seq.)); and,

The goals are accomplished through:

(A) *the strengthening of community capabilities for planning and coordinating the use of a broad range of Federal, State, local, and other assistance (including private resources) related to the elimination of poverty, so that this assistance can be used in a manner responsive to local needs and conditions;*

(B) *the organization of a range of services related to the needs of low-income families and individuals, so that these services may have a measurable and potentially major impact on the causes of poverty in the community and may help the families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency;*

(C) *the greater use of innovative and effective community-based approaches to attacking the causes and effects of poverty and of community breakdown;*

(D) *the maximum participation of residents of the low-income communities and members of the groups served by programs assisted through the block grants made under this subtitle to empower such residents and members to respond to the unique problems and needs within their communities; and*

(E) *the broadening of the resource base of programs directed to the elimination of poverty so as to secure a more active role in the provision of services for–*

 i. *private, religious, charitable, and neighborhood-based organizations; and*

 ii. *Individual citizens, and business, labor, and professional groups, who are able to influence the quantity and quality of opportunities and services for the poor.*

**CSBG Program Assurances** (§676A(b)a-c, (4)

(1)… funds made available through the grant or allotment will be used –

(A) *to support activities that are designed to assist low-income families and individuals, including families and individuals receiving assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601 et seq.), homeless families and individuals, migrant or seasonal farm workers, and elderly low-income individuals and families, and a description of how such activities will enable the families and individuals –*

 i. *to remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency (including self-sufficiency for families and individuals who are attempting to transition off a State program carried out under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act);*

ii*. to secure and retain meaningful employment;*

iii*. to attain an adequate education, with attention toward improving literacy skills of the low-income families in the communities involved, which may include carrying out family literacy initiatives;*

iv*. to make better use of available income;*

 v*. to obtain and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment;*

vi*. to obtain emergency assistance through loans, grants, or other means to meet immediate and urgent family and individual needs; and*

 vii. *to achieve greater participation in the affairs of the communities involved, including the development of public and private grassroots partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, local housing authorities, private foundations, and other public and private partners to –*

(I) *document best practices based on successful grassroots intervention in urban areas, to develop methodologies for widespread replication; and,*

 (II) *strengthen and improve relationships with local law enforcement agencies, which may include participation in activities such as neighborhood or community policing efforts;*

(B) *to address the needs of youth in low-income communities through youth development programs that support the primary role of the family, give priority to the prevention of youth problems and crime, and promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community-based youth development programs that have demonstrated success in preventing or reducing youth crime, such as –*

 i*. programs for the establishment of violence-free zones that would involve youth development and intervention models (such as models involving youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, and entrepreneurship programs); and*

 ii*. after-school child care programs*

(C) *to make more effective use of, and to coordinate with, other programs related to the purposes of this subtitle (including State welfare reform efforts*);

**Eligible Applicants**:

Eligible applicants are the Arkansas Community Action Agencies as defined by Arkansas Code Annotated § 20-80-305-306, and the Arkansas Community Action Agencies State Association.

**Eligible Projects:**

1. **Technology upgrades** to assist in achieving Community Action Agency service delivery by remote means with expected agency outcomes to address the response of the COVID-19 pandemic.
	* Accounting software upgrades
	* Data collection software upgrades
	* Computers and laptop upgrades for use of CSBG agency staff
	* Networking software to allow for remote work by agency staff
	* Website upgrades to allow for uploading applications from clients
	* Other upgrades or implementation as deemed necessary by the agency Technical Needs Assessment.
2. **Delivery of Services Alternate methods and Innovative Strategies to ensure the service delivery during the Covid-19 health crisis.**
3. **Personnel Protective Equipment and Cleaning Service**
* Equipment for use in cleaning buildings and work areas in response to limiting the spread of covid-19.
* Personnel costs related to cleaning buildings and work areas in response to limiting the spread of covid-19.
* Face coverings, hygiene items for staff and clients in response to limiting the spread of covid-19.
1. **Training and Technical Assistance** to assist the Arkansas Community Action Agencies in the response to the Covid-19 health crisis.

**II. Applicant Eligibility Criteria and Proposal Requirements**

Recipients of Community Services Block Grant funds are required to demonstrate that customers served by funded programs have an income at or below 125% of the current United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS) Poverty Guidelines. *§673(2)*.

1. **Technology Needs Assessment**

Applicants are required to:

1. document the geographic location and any boundaries of the proposed service area precisely and consistently;
2. describe the methodology used to assess the broad range of needs for services to the low-income community;
3. describe its efforts to include participation by low-income members of the community in the needs assessment process;
4. document the level of poverty in the area to be served and other conditions that were identified through the needs assessment process; and
5. demonstrate that the programs being proposed are consistent with the findings of Technology Needs Assessment.
6. Provide an agency **Technology Needs Assessment Report**.

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1. **Funding and Resource Mobilization (Budget)**

 Applicants are required to demonstrate that:

1. costs are reasonable and necessary to carry out the work scope;
2. the use of Community Service Block Grant CARES ACT funds for administration is equitable in relation to total agency operations.
3. Show any additional funding that will be used in the completion of this project.
4. Provide an agency-wide Organizational Budget.

**III. How to apply**

1. **Due Date and Time**

All applications MUST be received by the date stated on the cover page of this Request for Application.

**Applications which are received late will not be considered and will be returned to the applicant agency without review.**

1. **Application Submission**
2. Applicant must submit one single sided copy of the entire application in PDF format.
3. Submit the budget forms in Excel format.
4. The due date for submission of the Community Services Block Grant CARES ACT Funds application is **September 25, 2020 by 4:30 p.m**.
5. Submit the application via email to DHS.CSBG.Team@DHS.Arkansas.Gov. with a copy to Beverly.Buchanan@dhs.arkansas.gov.

The RFA and application package is available online at [www.http://humanservices.arkansas.gov](http://www.http://humanservices.arkansas.gov)

**IV. Funding**

It is anticipated that $ 679,894.00 in Community Services Block Grant CARES ACT Discretionary funds will be allocated for projects, and or activities of twenty-four months in length as specified in application.

Approved applicants will receive a grant award with purchase order information and grant assurances and guidelines. **Please note that these grants will be monitored the same as the regular CSBG grant awards.**

**V. Completing the Application**

**Requirements for Submission**

Applicants must apply using the Application and budget forms in the Request for Application. All sections should be completed. Additional pages may be attached where necessary.

**Application Cover Page and Project Summary**

Applicant Identification and Certifications, Attestations, and Acknowledgements

Project Summary and Proposal Information

Provide a summary that:

* Describes how the additional funding will enhance the organization’s capacity to deliver outcome-based services to the low-income residents of Arkansas.

**VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

Applications will be reviewed and all applicants will be notified of funding decisions. **Grant awards will have a start date of­ November 1, 2020**. Successful applicants will be notified of funding decisions through issuance of a Notice of Award document that sets forth the amount of funds granted, and the terms and conditions of the grant award, which are subject to approval by the Office of the State Procurement.

**VII. Sub-Grant Requirements for Approved Applicants**

**A. Federal Certifications**

Applicant should be aware that if selected, it will be required to certify as part of the executed sub-grant award, that it will comply with Federal requirements concerning the drug-free workplace, and debarment regulations, and Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke, and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities. The successful applicants will also be required to comply with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 USC § 1501-1508 and §7324-7328) which limit political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds.

**B. Prohibitions on Use of Funds**

Community Services Block Grant funds may NOT be used to **purchase or improve land, or for the purchase,**

**construction, or permanent improvement of any building or facility, or for political activities.**

**APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

Check off each section to ensure submission of a complete application.

* Applicant and Project Identification Cover Page
* Signed SF 424 Form
* Technology Needs Assessment
* Detailed Project Narrative
* Budget in Excel format
* Signed Budget Summary Sheet (PDF)
* Board minutes or Board Certification form

**APPLICATION PACKAGE**

These items are included in the application package

* Application Cover Sheet
* SF-424 Form
* CSBG Assurances
* Budget Form
* Board Certification Form