



Memorandum

Date: October 17, 2005

From: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs

Subject: OPA Program Instruction Series, OPA 05-03:
Full and Open Competition for Title X Funds;
Review of Applications for Title X Family Planning Grant Funds

To: Regional Health Administrators, Regions I-X

I. Full and Open Competition for Title X Funds

It is important that we ensure full and open competition for all available funds for Title X family planning grants. If, at any time, the Regional Office becomes aware of an area or population in need of family planning services, they are encouraged to make funds available for competition to serve the identified area or population. Federal family planning staff should provide appropriate technical assistance to potential applicants that includes explanation of program requirements as published in the program announcement. Appropriate input should be sought from the Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS) Office of Grants Management (OGM) staff regarding application and grants requirements.

II. Objective Review Policies

The Office of Public Health and Science follows the Awarding Agency Grants Administration Manual (AAGAM) and Grants Policy Directives (GPDs) as they apply to the objective review of grant applications. AAGAM Chapter 2.04.104.C Objective Review of Grants Applications governs the mechanism by which all applications must be reviewed, and should be referenced in organizing objective review procedures. These requirements are intended to ensure that the process for selecting applicants for funding is fair, equitable, "above board," and can withstand scrutiny; and that only those applications that offer the greatest potential for furthering the program purpose are selected for funding. Objective reviews will be based on this AAGAM chapter, and will adhere to, but not be limited to the following policies:

- Any circumstance that might introduce any conflict of interest, or appearance thereof, prejudices, biases, or predispositions into the process must be avoided. Independent reviewers are required to complete both a Conflict of Interest Statement and a Confidentiality Statement;
- Applications must undergo objective review by a minimum of three qualified independent reviewers (termed the Objective Review Committee or ORC). Documentation of the review outcome must be signed by all reviewers;

- Independent reviewers should be selected from a roster of individuals with knowledge in the field under review, and must be rotated on a regular basis. The reviewer roster must document the date the reviewer was placed on the roster, and dates of participation in reviews. No reviewer shall participate as a reviewer for the same program office for more than three consecutive years;
- Each application will be ranked based on predetermined ranking criteria using only the criteria published in the program announcement and available to all potential applicants;
- The ORC will rank all applications in order by score. The approving official, as noted in the program announcement, is responsible for reviewing the application ranking document and determining which applications will be approved for funding. The approving official may consider additional, objective information (e.g., published program priorities, published preference of special consideration, reviews of the Grants Management Office and Program Official) in determining approval for funding of a particular application. Should the application's position in the list of applications approved for funding be different than its position in the ranking list, a statement of the reasons for the difference that influenced the judgement of the approving official must be provided. This should include a justification for funding of the particular application.

III. Award of Supplemental Funds to Existing Grantees

Supplemental funds must be distributed to existing grantees based on a competitive process. Regional Offices should develop and publish an announcement of availability of supplemental funds that includes eligible entities, total funds available, total number of awards anticipated, amount or range of individual awards, purpose of supplemental awards, and criteria for review of applications.

In addition to review by the awarding Regional Office family planning program staff, competing supplemental requests should be reviewed by a party or parties outside the awarding Regional Office family planning program and decision-making authority. Documentation of review results, including reviewer signatures, must be compiled and forwarded to the OPHS Office of Grants Management for inclusion in the official grant file.

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for Population Affairs

Attachment:

- 1) "Objective Review Process Policy," (April 28, 2005, memorandum from John Jarman, OPHS Executive Officer).