



Funding Opportunity Title:

# Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP)

Funding Opportunity Number:

**ICAP-ICAP-24-001**

Financial Assistance/CFDA Number:

**96.007**

Due Date for Applications:

**June 3, 2024**



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## I. Program Description

### I. Program Description

#### A. Program purpose

This funding opportunity will award cooperative agreements allowing the Social Security Administration (SSA) to collaborate with States, foundations, and other non-federal groups and organizations who have the interest and ability to identify, operate, evaluate, and partially fund interventional research. The research and interventions under this program will target increasing employment and self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities, including people of color and other underserved communities (whether beneficiaries, applicants, or potential applicants of the Disability Insurance (DI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs); coordinating planning between private and public human services agencies to improve the administration and effectiveness of the DI, SSI, and related programs; assisting claimants in underserved communities to apply for or appeal decisions on claims for DI and SSI benefits; and conducting outreach to people with disabilities who are potentially eligible to receive SSI.

SSA intends the projects to have a project period of up to 5 years, with the first year intended to put any necessary data agreements into place, recruit additional partners<sup>1</sup>, and conduct any other implementation planning activities. If the project is able to meet these milestones in the first year, funding may be continued to implement and evaluate the project for up to four years.

#### B. Background

There is increased attention from policymakers on the employment of individuals with disabilities and their participation in the DI and SSI programs (e.g., the ***SSDI Solutions***<sup>2</sup> and ***SSI Youth Solutions*** initiatives). Usually, SSA's demonstration projects test new policies and programs designed within SSA to improve employment and self-sufficiency for beneficiaries, applicants, and potential

applicants. Due to the recent growth in awareness of public-policy interventional research outside the traditional SSA-led demonstration agenda, multiple entities (e.g., States, foundations, employer associations, and not-for-profit organizations) have shown expanded interest in testing policies that complement SSA's policies or require a waiver of SSA program rules. SSA recognizes the importance of partnering with external organizations, and the work supported with ICAP funding complements SSA's current demonstrations and partnerships with other Federal agencies. SSA also benefits from ideas brought by entities with first-hand experience with issues related to the agency's own policies and programs. SSA expects all projects to include people of color and members of underserved communities, both on their research teams and in the intervention's target population, as appropriate.

SSA's demonstration authority for this solicitation is derived from Section 1110<sup>3</sup> of the Social Security Act (the Act). Funds appropriated to SSA under Section 1110 are used to pay part of the cost of research or demonstration projects related to preventing or reducing dependency on Social Security programs, or that will aid in coordinating planning between private and public welfare agencies, or that will help improve program administration and effectiveness. Section 1110 allows SSA to waive requirements, conditions, and limitations of Title XVI, the SSI program, as necessary to carry out experimental, pilot, or demonstration projects that are likely to assist in promoting the objectives or facilitating the administration of the SSI program. Please note that SSA does not currently have demonstration authority that would allow waivers of Title II policy; we cannot waive Title II policy for any demonstration projects at this time.

The interventions proposed through this cooperative agreement program will be performed in cooperation between SSA and the recipients, with substantial involvement from SSA. SSA may have the authority to waive program rules for proposed interventions. When SSA agrees to waive such rules, SSA will require a greater level of involvement and control in the project.

These cooperative agreements represent a valuable opportunity for groups to partner with SSA on the development and evaluation of a proposed intervention,

<sup>1</sup> In this request for applications, partners include all collaborating parties on a proposed project (e.g., SSA, the lead applicant, sub-awardees, grant organizations, etc.)

<sup>2</sup> This website is not a government website. It is operated by a third party, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

<sup>3</sup> The full text of Section 1110 can be found [here](#).

## II. Federal Award Information

including the ability to access SSA data to evaluate the demonstration project or to seek an SSA Title XVI policy waiver for an intervention. When SSA data is needed for the proposed intervention or evaluation and SSA agrees to provide the data, SSA will include applicable data sharing terms as a part of the cooperative agreement. All data sharing must be consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

### C. Priority topics of interest

Proposals must address goals under at least one of the following priority topics. Proposals must identify the priority topic(s) the proposed intervention(s) will address and explain how the intervention(s) would address the priority topic(s).

- ◆ Reducing structural barriers in the labor market for people with disabilities, including people of color and other underserved communities, that increase the likelihood of people receiving or applying for DI or SSI benefits;
- ◆ Promoting self-sufficiency by helping people enter, stay in, or return to the labor force, including youth (such as by providing specialized counseling and employment services);
- ◆ Coordinating planning between private and public welfare agencies to improve the administration and effectiveness of the DI, SSI, and related programs (such as facilitating referrals to vocational rehabilitation or other service providers);
- ◆ Assisting claimants in underserved communities to apply for or appeal decisions on claims for DI and SSI benefits (such as providing legal assistance during an application, continuing disability review, or age-18 redetermination); and
- ◆ Conducting outreach to people with disabilities who are potentially eligible to receive SSI (such as directly working with homeless individuals).

(each) under this request for applications (RFA). The total amount awarded and number of awards will be determined based on the strength of the applications received and programmatic and budgetary considerations. SSA reserves the right to determine the number of awards, make no awards, or to make awards for amounts less than the amounts requested by the applicants.

Cooperative agreements require close cooperation and coordination between SSA and the recipients. SSA will have substantial involvement in the administration of the cooperative agreement, and SSA's input and approval are required before conducting most activities. SSA's involvement will include at least the following: providing technical input in the refinement of project model and evaluation methodologies proposed by the recipients, including data collection and analysis; collaborating in the development of a mutually defined data set for evaluation, as well as a standard for transmission of raw data, analyzed data, and reports between recipient and SSA; and providing technical assistance and input in the preparation of manuscripts related to the activities of the funded projects.

### B. Award amount and period of performance

SSA may fund interventions for up to five years with a total of up to \$4.5 million over the five-year project period. Applicants may not apply for more than the ceiling of \$4.5 million from SSA for each project. There is no minimum award, and applications with a \$0 budget are acceptable.

The start date will be no later than September 30, 2024.

Applications must include a project timeline in the project narrative. The project timeline must cover at least three years, up to a maximum of five years. All projects will start with one base year with the option to fund the remaining years. The one-year base period of each cooperative agreement will support the development of data sharing agreements, project planning, evaluation design, and other administrative aspects of the agreement. If the necessary agreements and other planning and administrative aspects are in place at the end of the first year, or sooner, and the planning process justifies it as an evaluable project, as determined by SSA, cooperative agreements may be extended for the remaining proposed project period (up to four additional years) during which the recipient will implement and evaluate the intervention. SSA reserves the right to not exercise the option to extend the

## II. Federal Award Information

### A. Type of award

SSA expects to award up to two cooperative agreements totaling up to \$4.5 million

### III. Eligibility Information

project after the one-year base period.

Base year spending (i.e., the spending for the first year of the award) shall be no more than 10 percent of the total budget.

The maximum amount available from SSA for an ICAP project is \$4.5 million for the entirety of a proposed project period. Applications with budgets including expectations of funding from SSA exceeding the ceiling will be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered. SSA will only consider one application per lead applicant per year. An entity may be a partner on more than one application if they are not the lead applicant on more than one application.

See Section V for the application review information.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible applicants

The following applicants are eligible to apply and will be referred to throughout the RFA as the “lead applicant” or “applicant”:

- ◆ States: For purposes of this RFA, the term “State” shall be consistent with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 CFR Part 200, include any of a State’s agencies or instrumentalities, and the terms “local government” and “federally recognized Indian tribe” shall have the meanings given in the Uniform Guidance and set forth in Appendix I.1, Applicants. (2 CFR 200.54, 200.64)<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Local governments
- ◆ Federally recognized Indian tribes
- ◆ Foundations
- ◆ Employer associations

- ◆ Not-for-profit organizations
- ◆ For-profit organizations, such as firms
- ◆ Educational institutions

### 1) Minority Serving Institutions

SSA relies on research to learn about the diverse people we serve, how they are affected by our programs, and ways in which our programs can be improved to better serve the public. As such, we recognize the importance of engaging with researchers and service providers who represent the diversity of the American public. For this reason, SSA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified under the eligibility section of this announcement, including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply under this opportunity. For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

- a. *HBCUs, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at <https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/one-hundred-and-five-historically-black-colleges-and-universities/>*
- b. *Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at <https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities/>*
- c. *Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at <https://sites.ed.gov/hispanic-initiative/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis/>*
- d. *Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/index.html>*
- e. *Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A map of these schools can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbi/index.html>*

## III. Eligibility Information

### 2) Responsibilities of the Lead Applicant

The lead applicant will serve as the recipient and have overall fiscal and administrative responsibility for the cooperative agreement, including performance of any sub-recipients. The lead applicant must be able to meet the following responsibilities. Fiscal responsibility may not be delegated to sub-recipients. Administrative responsibilities, such as project management, coordination, or delivery of intervention services, may only be delegated to sub-recipients with approval from SSA. The fiscal and administrative responsibilities for the lead applicant of the cooperative agreement include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the primary point of contact with SSA to receive and respond to all inquiries or communications under this RFA and any sub-recipients;
- the entity with authority to draw down funds;
- the entity responsible for submitting to SSA all work products under the cooperative agreement, including all related technical and financial reports, regardless of which partnership member performed the work;
- the entity that may request or agree to a revision or amendment of the cooperative agreement;
- the entity with overall responsibility for oversight or coordination of carrying out programmatic functions, including intervention implementation, administration, and collecting required project data, as well as the stewardship of all expenditures under the cooperative agreement;
- the entity responsible for working with SSA to close-out the cooperative agreement;
- the entity responsible for ensuring data accuracy, security, and privacy, including ensuring all individuals, including individuals under sub-recipients, follow all guidelines for protecting Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and other sensitive information and ensuring completion of personnel suitability clearances.

### B. Cost Sharing or matching

**The recipient is required to meet a minimum cost share of five percent of the federal funding requested.** The total approved cost of the project is the sum of the Federal share and the non-Federal share. The non-Federal share may be cash or in-kind (property or services) contributions.

### C. Other eligibility criteria

1. The intervention must relate to at least one of the priority topic areas listed in the Program Description, Section I.C. The project narrative must clearly state the priority topic(s) the intervention will address.
2. **Number of Applications Applicants May Submit**  
SSA will consider only one (1) application from each applicant. If SSA receives multiple applications from the same applicant, SSA will only consider the most recently received application that met the deadline. If the most recent application is disqualified for any reason, SSA will not replace it with an earlier application. Applicants may be sub-applicants on multiple applications or the lead applicant on one application and a sub-applicant on any other applications. A sub-applicant is any entity that will serve as a partner to the lead applicant in the performance of the work laid out in a proposal's project narrative.
3. **Application Screening Criteria**  
Use the checklist below as a guide when preparing your application package to ensure that the application meets all of the screening criteria. This checklist is only an aid for applicants and should not be included in the application package. Use this checklist to ensure that your application contains all required items. If your application does not meet all of the screening criteria, it will not move forward through the merit review process (see Section V.B.).

## IV. Application and Submission Information

Application Checklist	Complete?
<input type="checkbox"/> System for Award Management (SAM) Registration (Section IV.B.2).a)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility (See Section III)	
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, including a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), or the Entity ID (Section IV.B. 2.a)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Application for federal funds request does not exceed the ceiling amount. (Section II.B.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424A “Budget Information Form,” budget narrative and spreadsheet (Section IV.B.2.b)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative, including all required sections and required attachments (Section IV.B.2.c)	
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-LLL “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities” (Section IV.B.2.d)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment Form (Section IV.B.2.e)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment Form (Found in Grants.gov Workspace)	
<input type="checkbox"/> When submitted through Grants.gov, the components of the application are saved in any of the specified formats and are not corrupt. ( <b><i>We will attempt to open the document but will not take any additional measures in the event of problems with opening.</i></b> ) (See Section IV.B.2) and Section IV.C)	
<input type="checkbox"/> The deadline submission requirements are met (See Section IV.C)	

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. How to obtain an application package

This RFA, found at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), contains all the information and links to forms needed to apply for funding for this cooperative agreement program.

SSA will provide at least one informational webinar for potential applicants about the ICAP during the Round 4 application period. Information about the informational webinar will be available on the ICAP website at:

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/icap.html>.

### B. Content and form of application submission

#### 1) Notice of intent to apply

SSA strongly encourages organizations interested in applying to submit a Letter of Intent to Apply to SSA’s Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support. Obtaining advance information about the potential number of applications, as well as the general structure of the proposed intervention projects and evaluation plans, prior to the application deadline will assist SSA in developing an efficient application review process. A Letter of Intent to Apply should be submitted via e-mail to [SSA.ICAP@ssa.gov](mailto:SSA.ICAP@ssa.gov) on or prior to April 30. Please use “Intent to Apply” in the e-mail subject line and include the following information:



## IV. Application and Submission Information

- The lead applicant's name and address;
- A general overview of the intervention, including the target population and priority (from list in project description) the project will address, anticipated outcome(s) of the project, and a brief summary of the evaluation design (including, where applicable, federal data sets to which the project partners and/or evaluator anticipate needing to access, and the plan to gain access to that data);
- Existing evidence supporting the quality of causal evidence;
- Evidence supporting the efficacy (strength) of the intervention;
- Any preliminary information identifying the project partners;
- The intervention period (not to exceed five years, including one start-up year); and;
- Total anticipated funding request and total anticipated budget for the proposed project (including any non-SSA funds).

An applicant that does not submit a Letter of Intent to Apply may still apply for a cooperative agreement. An application may differ from what the applicant included in its Letter of Intent to Apply. See Section VIII.A regarding submission of proprietary information in response to this RFA.

### 2) Application for project award

Proposals submitted in response to this RFA **must** consist of five separate and distinct parts:

- SF-424 “Application for Federal Assistance”
- SF-424A “Budget Information Form,” budget narrative and spreadsheet
- Project Narrative and required attachments
- SF-LLL “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities” (submit with “N/A” in all required fields if no lobbying activities.)
- Risk Assessment Form

**Applications lacking any of these five parts will be deemed incomplete and may be disqualified prior to the technical review process.** You must ensure that the funding amount requested is consistent across all parts and sub-parts of the application.

Below is a description of each required part of the application.

#### a) SF-424 “Application for Federal Assistance”

You must complete the SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance” (available at [https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424\\_4\\_0-V4.0.pdf](https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424_4_0-V4.0.pdf)).

In the address field, fill out the nine-digit (plus hyphen) zip code. Nine-digit zip codes can be looked up on the USPS website at <https://tools.usps.com/go/ZipLookupAction!input.action>.

The SF-424 must clearly identify the applicant and must be signed by an individual with authority to enter into a grant or cooperative agreement. Upon confirmation of an award, the individual signing the SF-424 on behalf of the applicant is considered the Authorized Representative of the applicant. As stated in block 21 of the SF-424 form, the signature of the Authorized Representative on the SF-424 certifies that the organization is in compliance with the Assurances and Certifications form SF-424B (example available at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>). You do not need to submit the SF-424B with the application.

- Requirement for Unique Entity Identifier
  - ◆ The federal government transitioned from using the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to uniquely identify entities in April 2022. Entities that wish to do business with the federal government will need to use a UEI created in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
  - ◆ All applicants for federal grant and cooperative agreement funding opportunities must have a UEI and must supply their UEI on the SF-424. The UEI uniquely identifies business entities.
  - ◆ If your entity is already registered in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), you already have your UEI, and it is viewable in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

## IV. Application and Submission Information

- ◆ If you do not have a UEI, you can get one at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
- ◆ Grant and cooperative agreement recipients authorized to make sub-awards must meet these requirements related to UEIs.
- ◆ Grant and cooperative agreement recipients must notify potential sub-recipients that no entity may receive a sub-award from you unless the entity has provided its UEI to you.
- ◆ Grant and cooperative agreement recipients may not make a sub-award to an entity unless the entity has provided its UEI to you.
- ◆ (See, Appendix A to 2 CFR section 25.)
- Requirement for Registration with SAM
  - ◆ Applicants must register with SAM before submitting an application. Find instructions for registering with SAM can at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.
  - ◆ Award recipients must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application under consideration. To remain registered in the SAM database after the initial registration, the applicant is required to review and update the registration at least every 12 months from the date of initial registration or subsequently update its information in the SAM database to ensure it is current, accurate, and complete. For purposes of this paragraph, the applicant is the entity that meets the eligibility criteria and has the legal authority to apply for and to receive the award. If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time the Grant Officer is ready to make a federal award, the Grant Officer may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

### b) SF-424A “Budget Information Form,” budget narrative and spreadsheet

You must complete the SF-424A Budget Information Form (example available at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>). In preparing the Budget Information Form, you must provide a concise narrative explanation to support the budget request, explained in detail below.

**Budget Narrative:** The budget narrative must provide a description of costs associated with each line item on the SF-424A. It must describe how the proposed budget aligns to the project work plan and identify how each milestone will be adequately funded within the proposed budget. Overhead and administrative costs should be reasonable and clearly identified, such that they can be compared to the level of funding allocated to project service coordination and delivery. According to [2 CFR 200.404](#), a cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost.

It is expected that a majority of project funding will be devoted to project service coordination and delivery. Participant incentives must not constitute more than 10 percent of any annual budget; however, guaranteed income or similar payments that are part of the intervention itself are not considered participant incentives for budgetary purposes. The budget narrative must detail how the applicant plans to meet the cost sharing requirements set forth in Section III.B.

**Budget Detail Worksheet:** Include a spreadsheet that captures the details of the budget narrative in numeric format. Include all calculations to support each line item in a budget category. Show unit cost details (e.g., percent of time, mileage, rates, cost per square foot, etc.) in your computations.

Applicants must identify all sources of funding for the proposed project if non-SSA funds are necessary to the success of the proposed project. The budget narrative must include the source, amount, and limitations on use of funds. Additionally, applicants must include either statements of assurance from existing funders or detailed plans for obtaining the additional funds.

Use the following guidance for preparing the budget narrative and spreadsheet:

- **Personnel:** List all staff positions by title (both current and proposed). Provide the annual salary of each position, the percentage of each position’s time devoted to the project, the amount of each position’s salary funded by the cooperative agreement, and the total personnel cost for the period of performance.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

- **Fringe Benefits:** Provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes, retirement, etc.
- **Travel:** Specify the purpose, mileage, per diem, estimated number of in-state and out-of-state trips, and other costs for each type of travel.
- **Equipment:** Identify each item of equipment you expect to purchase which has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit (or if your capitalization level is less than \$5,000, use your capitalization level) and a useful lifetime of more than one year (see 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition of Equipment). List the quantity and unit cost per item. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are supplies, not “equipment”. In general, we do not permit the purchase of equipment during the last funded year of the cooperative agreement.
- **Supplies:** Identify categories of supplies (e.g., office supplies) in the detailed budget and list the quantity and unit cost per item. Supplies include all tangible personal property other than “equipment” (see 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition of Supplies).
- **Contractual:** Under the Contractual line item, delineate contracts and sub-awards separately. Contracts are defined according to 2 CFR 200.1 as a legal instrument by which a non-federal entity purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a federal award. A subaward, defined by 2 CFR 200.1, means an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the sub-recipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a Federal program. For each proposed contract and subaward, specify the purpose and estimated cost.
- **Construction:** Construction costs are not allowed and this line must be left as zero. Minor alterations to adjust an existing space for activities that are part of the cooperative agreement (such as a classroom alteration) may be allowable. We do not consider this as construction and you must show the costs on other appropriate lines such as Contractual.
- **Other:** Provide clear and specific detail, including costs, for each item so that we are able to determine whether the costs are necessary, reasonable and allocable. List any item, such as stipends or incentives, not covered elsewhere here.
- **Indirect Costs:** If you include indirect costs in the budget, then you must include one of the following:
  - ◆ If you have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), provide an explanation of how the indirect costs are calculated. This explanation should include which portion of each line item, along with the associated costs, are included in your cost allocation base. Also, provide a current version of the NICRA.

**OR**

  - ◆ If you intend to claim indirect costs using the 10 percent de minimis rate, please confirm that your organization meets the requirements as described in 2 CFR 200.414(f). Clearly state that your organization has never received a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), and your organization is not one described in Appendix VII of 2 CFR 200, paragraph (D)(1)(b).
  - ◆ Applicants choosing to claim indirect costs using the de minimis rate must use Modified Total Direct Costs (see 2 CFR 200.1 and below for definition) as their cost allocation base. Provide an explanation of which portion of each line item, along with the associated costs, are included in your cost allocation base. Note that there are various items not included in the calculation of Modified Total Direct Costs. See below the definitions to assist you in your calculation.

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the sub-awards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each sub-award in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

See Section IV.E.1) for more information. Note that the SF-424, SF-424A, and budget narrative must include the entire federal grant or cooperative agreement amount requested.

Applicants should list the same requested Federal grant or cooperative agreement amount on the SF-424, SF-424A, and budget narrative. If SSA finds minor inconsistencies between the budget amounts specified on the SF-424, SF-424A, and the budget narrative, SSA will consider the SF-424 the official funding amount requested. However, if the amount specified on the SF-424 would render the application nonresponsive, the Grant Officer will use his or her discretion to determine whether the intended funding request (and match or cost share if applicable) is within the responsive range.

### c) Project Narrative

The Project Narrative must demonstrate the applicant's capability to plan and implement the proposed project in accordance with the provisions of this RFA. It must provide a comprehensive framework and description of all aspects of the proposed project. It must be succinct, self-explanatory, and well organized so that reviewers can understand the proposed project. Instructions for the content of the Project Narrative are provided below.

All projects must meet the requirements of 20 C.F.R. Part 431, Protection of Human Subjects. The applicant is responsible for funding and securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the proposed project. IRB approval must be secured before any implementation of the intervention begins.

Applicants are discouraged from submitting information considered proprietary unless it is deemed essential for proper evaluation of the application. See Section VIII.A regarding submission of proprietary information in response to this RFA.

The Project Narrative is limited to no more than 40 double-spaced single-sided 8.5 x 11-inch pages with Times New Roman 12-point text font and standard 1-inch margins. If the applicant chooses to include a cover letter and/or Table of Contents, it will not count towards the page limit. Attachments to the project narrative are not included in the 40-page limit, but we will only exclude those attachments listed in the Attachments section below from the page limit.

Applicants must number the Project Narrative beginning with page number 1. There should be no more than 2 call out boxes per page. Any text in call out boxes or other exhibits should be no smaller than 8-point text font. Applications must be 508 compliant. Do not include blank pages in the project narrative document.

SSA will not evaluate materials beyond the specified page limit in the application review process.

The following instructions provide all the information needed to complete the Project Narrative. Carefully read and consider each section and include all required information in your Project Narrative. The agency will evaluate the Project Narrative using the scoring criteria identified in Section V.A.

Applicants must use the following section and subsection headers for the Project Narrative:

- Strategic Approach and Project Design
  - ◆ Comprehensive Description of the Model
  - ◆ Supporting Evidence
  - ◆ Evaluation Strategy
  - ◆ Work Plans and Timelines
- Organizational Capacity and Quality of Key Personnel
- Management/Operational Plan
  - ◆ Risk Management and Opportunities
  - ◆ Continuous Quality Improvement
- Attachments to the Project Narrative

Below is a description of what must be included in each section of the project narrative.

#### i. Strategic Approach and Project Design

This section should open with a clear statement providing a title for the project and the priority topic(s) to be addressed by the project design.

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This section must include at least the following subsections, which are further described below:

- Comprehensive Description of Model
- Supporting Evidence
- Evaluation Strategy
- Work Plans and Timelines

Additional subsections may be included, but size limitations for the project narrative will apply.

### **i-1. Comprehensive Description of Model**

This subsection of the application must describe the design of the proposed model including the type, duration, and scope of the services to be provided in the service delivery model and the outreach, recruitment, and enrollment strategies that will be employed for identifying and targeting the applicable population and engaging stakeholders.

Applicants are encouraged to use community-engaged methods as a part of their project design, specifically the inclusion of people from the target communities in the development of the research design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings. As appropriate, the design should include how the project will incorporate people of color, underserved communities, or those with lived experiences in the issues studied as stakeholders and in their target population for the project. It must also show how the requested funds and other resources will support the proposed activities and how the proposed activities will lead to the proposed interim outputs and ultimate outcomes. The description must make clear how the project design will address the priority topic stated in the narrative opening.

This subsection must describe specific strategies to be used or adapted by the project. The description must identify the theory of

change for the model and its evidence base. The applicant must also identify the activities that will be conducted. Applicants must also describe any past and current efforts to address the issue. They must also describe how the activities in the proposed project differ from those currently occurring, and how the new activities will lead to improved outcomes, specifically, how the proposed intervention will benefit current, potential, or future beneficiaries.

Applicants must identify the target population(s) their efforts will focus upon and provide data and information to support the need for their proposed efforts, including characteristics, estimated size of total population, and expected sample size. Information must be provided to explain how focusing on the target population aligns to the goals of their intervention. Applicants must include available detail on the evidence base for the target population. Projects must be tailored to the specific context(s) in which implementation is planned, including demographic and socioeconomic issues of relevance. In articulating the problem or issue, applicants must demonstrate the extent of the problem in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Assumptions used to determine and describe the target population and expected sample size must be included as part of the project narrative, as well as support for why each of these assumptions is reasonable (i.e., the assumptions must be clearly stated and supported).

If the applicant will require SSA data for participant recruitment or implementation purposes, the application must clearly identify such needs in order for SSA to determine whether it will be possible to provide the data during the period of performance. Please note that SSA cannot share certain data (e.g., personally identifiable information) without appropriate disclosure authority (e.g., prior consent from the potential project participants, applicable routine use authority (see 5 U.S.C. § 552a(b)) and cannot share certain data (e.g., third-party data) without additional permissions, or at all.

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### i-2. Supporting Evidence

The subsection must include a discussion of the evidence base for each of the intervention strategies incorporated into the project and the evidence base justifying the selection of the target population. This subsection must also describe how these strategies will address the priority topic(s) noted in the Strategic Approach and Project Design section of the Project Narrative.

SSA welcomes applications for a range of different types of studies, including not only causal studies (e.g., randomized control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental studies), but also non-experimental studies that may not meet the threshold of methodology to attribute causation.

If the proposed project builds on any prior research, the applicant must cite that research in the project narrative. If the application includes citations, a bibliography or list of referenced works must be included as an attachment to the project narrative. (Documents listed as required or requested attachments to the project narrative will not count towards the project narrative page limit.) If similar research has been previously reviewed and rated by a research clearinghouse (including the examples described below), such information should be included in the project narrative.

Relevant research clearinghouses that applicants may use to support their use of previous research or project design include, but are not limited to, the Department of Labor's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)<sup>5</sup>, the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)<sup>6</sup>, and the Administration for Children and Families' Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse<sup>7</sup>. Other similar clearinghouses that determine the level of each proposal's claims of and likelihood of producing causal evidence may also be cited.

All proposals must include information about any evidence ratings assigned to similar interventions and evaluation methods regarding the causal impact or potential identification of causal impacts of the proposed intervention. Application reviewers will determine if the level of each proposal's claims of, and likelihood of producing, causal evidence is in accord with the existing evidence and evaluation methods.

### i-3. Evaluation Strategy

This subsection must include the evaluation strategy for the intervention. The application must identify the evaluation methods to be used in the proposed project and any anticipated evaluation-related challenges. The review panelists will score proposals by the appropriateness of the proposed evaluation strategy and methods for proposed intervention project model. Evaluation strategies that allow for stronger attribution of causation, such as randomized studies, may score higher in this area than those without strategies that will enable researchers to attribute project impacts to the proposed intervention. However, all evaluation methods (including, but not limited to, qualitative, quantitative, participatory, mixed-methods, experimental, and quasi-experimental) are welcome and proposals will be judged by their overall completeness and quality.

This subsection must also include a description of the data that will be collected for the proposed evaluation and any SSA data the applicant wishes to request from SSA for evaluation purposes. If an applicant's recruitment, implementation, or evaluation strategies require SSA data, the application must clearly identify such needs in order for SSA to determine whether it will be possible to provide the data during the period of performance. Please note that SSA cannot share certain data (e.g., personally identifiable information) without prior consent from potential project participants, or applicable

5 <https://clear.dol.gov/>

6 <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

7 <https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/>

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routine use authority (see 5 U.S.C. § 552a(b)), and cannot share certain data (e.g., third-party data) without additional permissions or at all. See Section VI.B.2. for additional information.

This subsection should also include a description of how the evaluator will maintain independence from the group or groups tasked with implementation of the project involved in the project, as well as the evaluator's experience in conducting evaluations of program effectiveness, including, where available, well-implemented evaluations of the intervention or similar interventions.

Applicants will not be penalized if the lead organization has limited experience in conducting rigorous evaluations, as long as the proposal includes a partner that has such experience. Useful resources that might be helpful for organizations that have limited experience in conducting rigorous evaluations toward locating experienced evaluators include:

- The American Evaluation Association (<https://www.eval.org/>), which includes a searchable “Find an Evaluator” tool;
- The Program Manager’s Guide to Evaluation, a tool produced by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Administration for Children & Families (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/toolkit/program-managers-guide-evaluation>);
- Social science departments at universities, which often include staff with evaluation experience; and
- Research clearinghouses, such as CLEAR, WWC, and Pathways to Work (cited above), as the documentation included in these clearinghouses for intervention-based research typically cite the individuals or organizations who conducted these evaluations.

Applicants shall also include in their proposals to SSA any specific rights or ownership requested or claimed over the data or work product to be used, collected, or developed. Work product ownership and rights in data will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### i-4. Work Plans and Timelines

The work plan must include a description of the planning, start-up, implementation, closeout, and evaluation activities that will be conducted, along with a timeline and proposed milestones, outcomes, and metrics. Activities must include, but are not limited to:

- Partnerships:
  - Establishing or finalizing necessary partnerships, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and sub-award agreements, including data sharing agreements and contracts and financial agreements for service delivery; and
  - Meeting and engaging in strategic planning with partners identified in the application and other interested stakeholders to ensure service coordination and readiness for program implementation.
- Partnership with SSA:
  - Clearly identify the role(s) you are proposing that SSA have, including any data and data analyses you need from SSA, policy consultations with subject matter experts, and time commitments. (See Section VI.B.2)
- Service components and planning logistics:
  - Finalizing a plan for communication, outreach, recruitment, and enrollment of the target population; and
  - Establishing a process for any service or supports for participants.
- Personnel and training:
  - Developing training program and materials for service providers using evidence-based strategies and best practices to be used in the proposed model (identified in the previous section); and

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- Hiring and training of other necessary personnel.
- Implementation plan:
  - Proposed milestones, interim outputs, and outcome goals;
  - Proposed metrics for measuring process and program outputs and outcomes;
  - A detailed project timeline;
  - Initial plans for partnering with other key stakeholders;
  - A proposed data collection plan, which identifies the data collection process and data sources that will be utilized, how the required programmatic data elements will be provided, and how the data will be used for operational purposes;
  - A description of how any existing partner data systems will be utilized; and
  - A justification of any proposed incentives to study/intervention participants, both financial and non-financial incentives, which includes a description of why the incentives are necessary to further cooperative agreement-related activities and identifies the incentive value(s) and how they will be distributed and tracked.
- List of proposed deliverables, which at minimum must include:
  - All reporting requirements laid out in Section VI.D;
  - Project management reports;
  - Special topic reports;
  - Final report(s); and
  - Deliverable timeline.
- A detailed strategy for identifying, recruiting, and enrolling a sufficient number of participants to allow for a valid evaluation of

impacts, including:

- How the proposed target population will be identified and recruited (e.g., through a health care organization, an employer, an insurer, or other existing entity), including a projected timeframe for recruitment;
- How many individuals are estimated to qualify;
- How many individuals the applicant expects to serve; and
- A power analysis to show the size of effect that can be expected and why the expected effect size is policy relevant.
- Evaluation activities, including:
  - A proposed evaluation data collection plan, which identifies the data sources and data collection process(es) that will be utilized, and how the required data elements will be securely transmitted between partners (if appropriate);
  - Evaluation data collection timeline;
  - Evaluation progress report schedule; and
  - Proposed analysis plans.
- Communication/dissemination/engagement activities

### ii. Organizational Capacity and Quality of Key Personnel

This subsection must include information about and describe the readiness of the applicant and all partners to participate in both planning and implementation, and any resources that will be needed for full readiness to implement the project, if selected. This must include past, relevant experience running large, complex demonstration projects or other complex interventional projects. All resources, personnel, and established and planned partnerships must be identified. The research team should be diverse and inclusive, including people of color, members of underserved communities, and those with lived experiences, as appropriate. Applicants



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are encouraged to include institutions of color and scholars of color or from underserved communities, including people with disabilities, as collaborative partners.

Applicants must have experience working with people of color, underserved communities, and individuals with lived experiences, as appropriate.

Applicants must describe their capacity to effectively manage and carry out the programmatic, fiscal, administrative, and independent evaluation-related activities of the proposed project activities. The application must describe the guiding principles of the organization and its past experience and track record of performance. It must also demonstrate an understanding of the needs of the community or population that the applicant seeks to target. The application must include a description of the governance, organizational, and structural functions that will be in place to implement, monitor, and operate the model. The tasks to be conducted by each administrative component must also be described.

Applicants also must include a list of key personnel including the key personnel that are associated with the partner organizations. Each project must include at least a Principal Investigator, a Project Manager, and a Lead Evaluator. This list must also include any position that will function as a lead for a particular task, including service administration. For each person on this list, applicants must describe their relevant background, their roles, and overall responsibilities. Résumés must be included as attachments to the Project Narrative (see below).

Applicants must provide evidence of the following:

- The applicant must demonstrate relevant experience in successfully operating projects of similar size and complexity as well as the ability to support the independent evaluation. The applicant must provide up to five examples from the last five years to demonstrate successful operation experience and evaluation ability.

- The lead applicant must have the necessary facilities or the ability to secure such facilities. The lead applicant must also have the necessary infrastructure to effectively lead and implement the project.
- The establishment of a Leadership Team and the applicant's strategic plan for utilizing this team. The application must provide documentation that entities on the Leadership Team will have sustained, substantial commitment and active involvement. Such documentation can be provided through signed MOUs, letters of commitment, or other similar documents.
- Documentation of the establishment of relevant partnerships and partners' relevant experience in evidence-based strategies.
- The professional qualifications required of the project manager, project coordinators, program data collection lead/evaluation coordinator, and other key personnel, along with how these qualifications will be sufficient to ensure proper management of all project activities, including timely reporting and the ability to manage strategic partnerships.

### iii. Management and Operational Plan

Applicants must submit a detailed Management and Operational Plan that:

- Describes the activities and budgets for the period of performance;
- Includes a detailed timeline for implementation with major milestones; and
- Articulates an effective strategy for self-monitoring, risk management, and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

The plan must include roles and responsibilities of key partners and major milestones and dates for successfully executing the Management and Operational Plan.

The applicant must provide an organizational chart (see required attachment list below) demonstrating how the lead applicant will successfully manage this cooperative agreement and how the lead applicant

## IV. Application and Submission Information

will manage and facilitate the relationships between that entity and all other partnering or participating organizations to lead to the successful provision of services to participants under the model.

Applicants must explain in detail their project management approach and demonstrate their experience implementing a project of the proposed scope.

The plan must contain the following subsections: Risk Management and Opportunities and CQI:

### iii-1. Risk Management and Opportunities

This subsection must identify potential risks to planning and implementing the proposed project, such as difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of participants. Each identified risk must be accompanied by a proposed plan for addressing or overcoming the risk.

This subsection must also identify any opportunities to accelerate the project's planning or implementation and plans for taking advantage of such opportunities. Opportunities to accelerate the project could include leveraging existing partnerships.

### iii-2. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Recipients will be expected to analyze process data as part of CQI in order to improve processes without changing the underlying model. This subsection must describe the applicant's approach to CQI and how it will be coordinated with the evaluator. It must identify a specific CQI model and detail how the model will be utilized. The CQI plan must support the theory of change identified in the Strategic Approach and Project Design section of the Project Narrative and must clearly align with the required Project Logic Model attachment.

## iv. Attachments to the Project Narrative

In addition to the Project Narrative, you must submit attachments. All attachments must be clearly labeled as Attachments. You must submit your application in one package because documents received separately will not be attached to the application for review. We will only exclude those attachments in the lists of Required and Requested Attachments below from the Project Narrative page limit.

Save all files with descriptive file names of 50 characters or less and only use standard characters in file names: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, and underscore (\_). File names may not include special characters (e.g. &, -, \*, %, /, #), periods (.), blank spaces or accent marks, and must be unique (i.e., no other attachment may have the same file name). You may use an underscore (example: my\_Attached\_File.pdf) to separate a file name.

### ❖ Required Attachments (of the Project Narrative)

- Project Logic Model
- Résumés of Proposed Key Personnel (up to 3 pages per person)
- Organizational Chart
- Abstract
  - Up to three pages, summarizing the proposed project, including but not limited to the scope of the project and proposed outcomes, including how the proposed intervention will benefit current, potential, or future beneficiaries. The abstract must include the following information:
    - Lead applicant's name and contact information;
    - Project name/title;
    - Description of proposed geographic areas to be served;
    - Description of the proposed target population and planned number of enrollees;
    - Funding level requested and sources of additional funding;

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- Overview of the proposed project including the proposed partners and the role that each will play; and the activities to be carried out and the applicant's plan for achieving their proposed outcomes.
  - When submitting in Grants.gov, this document should be uploaded as an attachment to the application package and specifically labeled "Abstract."
- ❖ Requested Attachments

We request the following attachments, as applicable, but their omission will not disqualify the application:

- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
  - If you are requesting indirect costs based on a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by your Federal Cognizant Agency, then attach the most recently approved Agreement. (For more information, see Section IV.B.2. and Section IV.E.1.) This attachment does not affect scoring of the application.
  - Bibliography or evidence base for the target population as documented through reports, papers, or other available data.
  - General letters of support (e.g., from organizations the lead applicant intends to partner with for the proposed project).

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### d) SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

This is a required form used to report lobbying activities. If there are none, please write N/A in the appropriate box.

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### e) Risk Assessment Form

This is a required form. Responses to the questions will help SSA evaluate any risks posed by applicants.

## C. Submission date, times, process, and addresses

All applications are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 3, 2024. To obtain an application package visit the Grants.gov website: [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). The application package includes the standard forms used to apply for SSA grants, i.e. SF-424, 424B and SF-111. Eligible applicants may apply via the new [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) Workspace or by completing all necessary forms and documents offline and uploading them to the site. **Applications that have not been fully completed in Workspace or uploaded to Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on the date due will be considered incomplete and may be excluded from the technical merit review.**

The Funding Opportunity Number for this solicitation is ICAP-ICA-24-001. The Grants.gov webpage is available to help explain the registration and application submission process. In addition, new Federal award applicants may find the following link to be helpful (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>).

If you experience problems with the steps related to registering to do business with the Federal Government or application submission, your first point of contact is the Grants.gov support staff at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov), 1-800-518-4726. If this does not resolve your problems with Grants.gov you may also contact the SSA Grants Management Team at [Grants.Team@ssa.gov](mailto:Grants.Team@ssa.gov) for assistance.

You may submit questions about ICAP to [SSA.ICAP@ssa.gov](mailto:SSA.ICAP@ssa.gov). We will post all questions and answers regarding this Funding Opportunity to the ICAP project page on the SSA website at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/icap.html>. All potential applicants should monitor the website frequently to ensure that they have the latest updates and information.

## D. Intergovernmental review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

## V. Application Review Information

### E. Funding restrictions

All proposed project costs must be necessary and reasonable and in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance), codified at 2 CFR. Part 200. Determinations of allowable costs will be made in accordance with the Cost Principles, codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E. Disallowed costs are those charges to a grant or cooperative agreement that the grantor agency or its representative determines not to be allowed in accordance with the Cost Principles or other conditions contained in the grant or cooperative agreement. Applicants, whether successful or not, will not be entitled to reimbursement of pre-award costs.

#### 1) Indirect costs

As specified in Subpart E of the OMB Uniform Guidance Cost Principles, indirect costs are those that have been incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be readily identified with a particular final cost objective. An indirect cost rate is required when an organization operates under more than one grant, cooperative agreement or other activity, whether federally assisted or not. You have two options to claim reimbursement of indirect costs.

- ◆ Option 1: You may use a NICRA or Cost Allocation Plan (CAP) supplied by the Federal Cognizant Agency. If you do not have a NICRA/CAP or have a pending NICRA/CAP, and in either case choose to include estimated indirect costs in your budget, at the time of award the Grant Officer will release funds in the amount of 10% of salaries and wages to support indirect costs. Within 90 days of award, you are required to submit an acceptable indirect cost proposal or CAP to your Federal Cognizant Agency to obtain a provisional indirect cost rate. (See Section IV.B.ii.4. for more information on NICRA submission requirements.)
- ◆ Option 2: Any organization that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, with the exceptions noted at 2 CFR 200.414(f) in the Cost Principles, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (see 2 CFR 200.1 for definition) which may be used indefinitely. If you choose this option, this methodology must be used consistently for

all federal awards until such time as you choose to negotiate for an indirect cost rate, which you may apply to do at any time. (See 2 CFR 200.414(f) for more information on use of the de minimis rate.)

#### 2) Travel

Any travel undertaken in performance of this cooperative agreement shall be subject to and in strict accordance with federal travel regulations.

### F. Other submission requirements

- Withdrawal of Applications: Applications may be withdrawn by written notice to the Grant Officer at any time before an award is made.
- If you include hyperlinks in your proposal, SSA cannot guarantee that the software used to prepare your proposals for review panels will accurately identify the URLs associated with the links in your proposal. If you reference a website in your proposal, please make sure to include the complete URL of the website.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Scoring criteria

This section fully describes the technical merit scoring criteria for applications received in response to this funding opportunity. In preparing applications, applicants are strongly encouraged to review the programmatic requirements. Applications will be scored on a scale of 0-100 according to the point distribution specified in the table below. Cost sharing will not be considered in the technical merit scoring, since ability to meet cost share is already required to be eligible for this award. However, if it is determined during any point in the review process that an applicant cannot meet cost sharing requirements, the application will be deemed ineligible. For scoring purposes, more weight will be given based on quality than on quantity.

## V. Application Review Information

Application Part	Subsection	Criterion	Point
Project Narrative	Strategic approach and Project Design	Comprehensive Description of Model	20
		Supporting Evidence	10
		Evaluation Strategy	25
		Work Plans and Timelines	10
	Organizational Capacity and Quality of Key Personnel	Whole subsection and attached Résumés	15
	Management and Operational Plan	Whole subsection and attached Organizational Chart	10
SF-424 A Budget	Budget Narrative and Spreadsheet	Budget Narrative and Spreadsheet	10
<b>Total</b>			<b>100</b>

Review panel members (“panelists”) will assign scores up to the point values listed in the table. Points will be deducted from those values based on any criteria listed in Section IV or Section V that the applicant has not included in the application. All full point value should reflect that all criteria have been met. Panelists should provide an identified weakness for any points deducted. Panelists will use the following criteria to assess applications received in response to this announcement:

### 1) Strength of Strategic Approach and Proposed Project Design

#### a) Comprehensive Description of Model: Up to 20 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Description of target population and recruitment plan: Up to 6 points
- Description of intervention: Up to 7 points
- Description of intervention appropriateness and expected goals/outcomes: Up to 7 points

The likelihood of success will be determined by whether the particular project is designed, structured, and implemented in a way that will foster success. To this end, the panelists will assess the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the applicant’s project narrative for delivering the intervention.

The project narrative must include a statement of the priority topic(s) to be addressed by the intervention, and the design must be appropriate to address the stated topic. The design must be based on relevant evidence and appear to have a high likelihood of success. The model design must be feasible and appear likely to result in significant improvement upon existing service. The design must explain why the target population identified is appropriate and the evidence base for the chosen target population, as well as present a recruitment strategy the reviewers deem viable. Panelists will also review any community engaged methods included in the project design to determine the level of inclusion of the people from the target communities in development, data collections, analysis, and dissemination of findings.

The proposal must indicate the overall expected goals, as well as the magnitude and breadth of impact of the project on improving outcomes. The panelists will determine if the goals for improvement set forth in the proposal are credible given the description of the model.

Panelists will also review the criteria used to determine the eligibility of an individual for participation in the project, including how the target population will be identified, how individuals will be referred to the project, and how they will be enrolled in it, including, as appropriate, information about the proposed inclusion of people of color and members of underserved communities. Applications will be assessed based on the soundness of the methodology for identifying the target population, the size of the relevant target population, and the thoroughness of the applicant’s plan for referring and enrolling individuals, including assurances that the process avoids targeting easier-to-serve individuals from the target population for enrollment. The panelists will also consider

## V. Application Review Information

whether, to the extent applicable, the applicant has demonstrated that members of the target population are not being unfairly discriminated against in the selection, referral, and enrollment process.

Panelists and applicants should also refer Section IV.B.2.c.i.i-1 to assess responsiveness of this section to proposal requirements.

### b) Supporting Evidence: Up to 10 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Description of evidence for planned intervention type: Up to 5 points
- Description of evidence for planned evaluation type: Up to 5 points

Panelists should evaluate each proposal based on the information in the proposals about any existing evidence for the proposed intervention, as well as the level of each proposal's claims of exiting causal evidence and/or ability to generate causal evidence based on the evaluation design.

All proposals must include information about any evidence ratings assigned to similar interventions and evaluation methods by relevant clearinghouses regarding the causal impact or potential identification of causal impacts of the proposed intervention. If the proposed project builds on any prior research, such information should be included in the project narrative. For proposed projects that do not build on research that a clearinghouse has previously reviewed and rated, the project narrative should include information about the rating the project would likely receive under the clearinghouses' criteria based on their design.

Panelists will award points for evidence based on previous interventions, interventions similar to the proposed intervention that were shown to produce the desired outcomes as a direct result of the intervention and not as a result of other factors, or interventions designed to produce strong causal evidence.

Panelists and applicants should also refer Section IV.B.2.c.i.i-2 to assess responsiveness of this section to proposal requirements.

### c) Evaluation Strategy: Up to 25 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Description of evaluation design and methodology, including data to be collected: Up to 9 points
- Appropriateness of methods to answer evaluation questions: Up to 8 points
- Description of the evidence the evaluation will generate: Up to 8 points

Panelists will consider the expected quality of the evaluation that would be conducted with respect to the agreement. The panelists will assess the project's evaluation design and the metrics that will be collected. Randomized control trials (RCTs) and designs with the ability to detect unambiguous causal impacts may receive higher scores than those that do not include these elements, but strong evaluation designs will not outweigh poorly designed interventions. The evaluation plan must demonstrate a clear legal and logistical ability and willingness to provide all required project data, including through any necessary data sharing agreements. Additionally, the panelists will assess the independence of the evaluator from the other entities involved in the project and the evaluator's experience in conducting rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness, including, where available, well-implemented evaluations on the intervention or similar interventions. The panelists will assess whether the applicant's plans to collaborate with the evaluator are clear and well-developed and demonstrate an ability to effectively and consistently support a rigorous evaluation. No points will be deducted if the lead organization has limited experience in conducting rigorous evaluations, as long as the proposal includes a partner that has such experience.

Panelists will consider the metrics that will be collected and analyzed in the evaluation to determine whether the outcomes have been achieved as a result of the intervention and how the metrics will be measured; as well as the applicant's explanation of how the metrics used in the evaluation are independent, objective indicators of impact and are not subject to manipulation by the service provider (the organization delivering the services described in the project narrative portion of the proposal), intermediary, or funding partners, if any.

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Panelists and applicants should also refer Section IV.B.2.c.i.i-3 to assess responsiveness of this section to proposal requirements.

### d) Workplans and Timelines: Up to 10 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Description of tasks throughout lifespan of project: 5
- Description of timeline for accomplishing tasks throughout project: 5

The panelists will assess the applications with respect to both the thoroughness of the timeline and the extent to which the intervention is achievable, particularly the service delivery plan. The work plan must include a description of the planning, start-up, implementation, closeout, and evaluation activities that will be conducted, along with a timeline and proposed milestones, outcomes, and metrics. To the extent the applicant intends to use partners to secure additional funding and has not already identified and received commitments from them, the panelists will consider the experience of the lead applicant or other secured partners in raising funds for social service investments.

Panelists and applicants should also refer Section IV.B.2.c.i.i-4 to assess responsiveness of this section to proposal requirements.

### 2) Organization Capacity: Up to 15 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Relevant Experience and Facilities and Infrastructure: 10 points
- Key Personnel and Partners: 5 points

This must reflect the combined capacity of all collaborative partners. It is not necessary for the lead applicant to meet all the requirements, just that the collaborative team can meet all of the requirements.

- Relevant Experience
  - ◆ The applicant must demonstrate relevant experience in successfully operating up to five innovative projects of similar size, length, and

complexity to the intervention proposed, in the past five years as well as the ability to support the independent evaluation.

- ◆ The applicant or other collaborative team member must demonstrate experience working with people of color, underserved communities, and individuals with lived experiences, as appropriate.
- Facilities and Infrastructure
  - ◆ The lead applicant must have the necessary infrastructure to effectively lead the project, and the application must describe a track record or a path to establishing the required processes and infrastructure to achieve proposed milestones. The lead applicant or a confirmed collaborative partner must have the necessary facilities to effectively implement the project as described.
- Key Personnel
  - ◆ The key personnel proposed to lead the project must have the skills and experience needed to assure smooth and effective planning and pilot activities, as well as support the independent evaluation. The key personnel should reflect a research team that is diverse and inclusive of people of color, members of underserved communities, and people with lived experiences, as appropriate. Refer to Section VI.B.2.c.ii for full instructions.
- Partners
  - ◆ In recognition that the likelihood of success is also determined by the capabilities of the project partners (if there are any), the panelists will assess the assigned responsibilities and the qualifications of the partners. This will include an assessment of the applicant's description of the roles and responsibilities of each entity involved in the project, including, to the extent applicable, any State or local government entity, intermediary, service provider, funding provider, or other stakeholder. Applicants are encouraged to include institutions of color and scholars of color or from underserved communities, including people with disabilities as collaborative partners. The panelists will also assess the relevance and depth of expertise of each service provider and capacity of each service

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provider to deliver the intervention, as described by the applicant. Likewise, the panelists will review the relevance and depth of experience of any project intermediary and the capacity of the intermediary to fill the roles assigned to it. Refer to Section IV.B.2 and any relevant subsections to assess proposal responsiveness to any proposed partner roles.

### 3) Management and Operational Plan: Up to 10 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- Written plan including risk management and CQI plans: Up to 8 points
- Organizational Chart: Up to 2 points

The Management and Operational Plan (see Section IV.B.2.c.) must be well-described and show evidence of effectively supporting the project. The proposed Management and Operational Plan must be specific and show a realistic probability of the applicant's ability to effectively meet the objectives and carry out the proposed project to achieve the desired outcomes on time and within budget. Staff and partner responsibilities must be clearly defined, and the project partners identified by the applicant have the administrative ability to carry out their part of the project. The time allocated to conduct project activities must appear adequate, and the timelines and milestones identified for accomplishing project tasks are detailed and reasonable.

The applicant must present a well-designed and credible plan for regular reporting of performance and quantitative data for self-monitoring the progress of the project. The minimal reporting requirements are laid out in Section VI.D., including quarterly financial reports, quarterly performance reports, evaluation progress reports, and final evaluation report.

The applicant must clearly include quantifiable metrics for monitoring the progress of its project using CQI and for supporting evaluation assessing the project's impact on improving outcomes. Monitoring is separate from, but related to, evaluation and there must be distinct metrics tied to operational goals and outputs (such as recruitment, documents mailed, level of service receipt, etc.) and program outcomes (such as employment, benefit receipt/amount, etc.). The applicant must include a clear plan for obtaining and providing the required

programmatic data. Mechanisms must be included for ensuring high-quality products and services and for maintaining fidelity to the intervention design.

### 4) Budget and Budget Narrative: Up to 10 points

Point value breakdown for scoring:

- SF-424 and SF-424A: Up to 5 points
- Budget narrative: Up to 5 points

The proposed budget and budget narrative should be carefully developed, with plans for efficient use of funds. The budget should be constructed from a data-driven evidence base that informs its projections. Overhead and administrative costs must be reasonable (see [2 CFR 200.404](#)) and the majority of funding is projected to be used for project activities. Participant incentives must not constitute more than 10 percent of any annual budget; however, guaranteed income or similar payments that are part of the intervention itself are not considered participant incentives for budgetary purposes.

Applicants must identify all sources of funding for the proposal. In the budget narrative, applicants must identify how they will meet the required 5 percent cost share, as well as any other non-SSA funds that will be used to complete the activities included in proposal. The budget narrative must include the source, amount, and limitations on use of funds. Additionally, applicants must include either statements of assurance from existing funders or detailed plans for obtaining the additional funds.

## B. Review and Selection Process

### 1) Phase 1: Completeness and Eligibility Review

In the first review phase, SSA will review all applications to determine eligibility and completeness in accordance with Sections III and IV of this RFA. This review, which will consist of a non-substantive review to determine whether the applicant is an eligible entity; whether the applicant demonstrates ability to meet cost sharing requirements; whether the proposed project qualifies as an



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eligible project (addresses a specified priority topic(s)); and whether each of the application content requirements set forth has been satisfied. SSA will reject an application received from an ineligible entity. An application for an ineligible project will be rejected. Applicants must clearly state the priority topic the intervention will address (see Section I.C.). Incomplete applications may, at SSA's discretion, receive further consideration.

### 2) Phase 2: Technical Merit Panel Review

SSA will assign complete applications submitted by eligible applicants to one or more panels of subject matter experts who will be selected based on their knowledge of the topic addressed, technical expertise in the type of intervention, experience working with the target population that is the subject of the application, or other considerations. Review panelists may be selected from federal or state agencies, non-profits, the private sector, or others. Reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

The panelists assigned to an application will score that application in accordance with the criteria set forth in the table in Section V.A., which reflects the considerations that SSA will consider when granting awards. The total and component scores will serve as a reference in the further phases of review discussed below, and awards may be made out of rank order. The panel scores will not be binding with respect to these further phases of review; furthermore, SSA may reject applications that show significant deficiencies with respect to any one component that is critical to the success of the project.

### 3) Phase 3: Consistency Review and Recommendation

Following the panel review, SSA will review application scores for consistency among subject matter experts on each panel and across panels and rank the applications.

The final scores will serve as the primary basis for selection of applications for funding. The panel review results are advisory in nature and not binding on the Grant Officer. The Grant Officer reserves the right to make selections based solely on the final scores or to take into consideration other relevant factors when applicable. Such factors may include the geographic distribution of funds,

distribution across the priorities, whether the proposal includes meaningful leveraged resources, and/or other relevant factors. For the purposes of this RFA, "meaningful leveraged resources" describes the resources (e.g., funding, systems, staff, programs, etc.) of multiple stakeholders being effectively blended in such a way that the program's impact on participants and program partners is enhanced. The Grant Officer may consider any information that comes to his/her attention.

### 4) Phase 4: Review of Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System

As required by the Uniform Guidance, SSA will review and consider any information about an applicant that is in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS) before making any award in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000) over the period of performance. Each applicant may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. SSA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in FAPIS in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in the Uniform Guidance.

Further, as required by Appendix XII of the OMB Uniform Guidance, non-federal entities (NFEs) are required to disclose in FAPIS any information about criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings, or affirm that there is no new information to provide. This applies to NFEs for which the total value of active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts received from all federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of an award or project. This means that SSA may reject an application based on the information contained in FAPIS even if the applicant otherwise scores highly under the 100-point scale.

SSA will comply with the requirements of 31 C.F.R. Part 19, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement). Additionally, as part of its risk evaluation, SSA may impose special conditions on an award that correspond to the degree of risk identified in SSA's review of the application. Criteria to be evaluated

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include: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in the Uniform Guidance; (3) the applicant's record in managing awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, if it is a prior recipient of such federal awards, including timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements and, if applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards; (4) reports and findings from audits performed under Subpart F, Audit Requirements of the Uniform Guidance, or the reports and findings of any other available audits and monitoring reports containing findings, issues of non-compliance or questioned costs; and (5) the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on recipients.

### C. Application Clarification and Feedback

SSA may elect to award the cooperative agreement(s) with or without discussions with the applicant. Should a cooperative agreement be awarded without discussions, the award will be based on the applicant's signature on the SF-424, including electronic signature via E-Authentication on <https://www.grants.gov>, which constitutes a binding offer by the applicant.

However, during the course of the review process, SSA may ask some applicants to provide confirming or clarifying information. SSA uses such information to inform funding recommendations. A request for confirmation or clarification does not guarantee a cooperative agreement award. If an applicant does not respond by the deadline to a request for information, SSA may remove its application from consideration.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Before the actual cooperative agreement is awarded, SSA may enter into negotiations and discussions with the applicant regarding program components, staffing and funding levels, and/or administrative systems in place to support cooperative agreement implementation. If the negotiations do not result in a mutually acceptable submission, SSA reserves the right to terminate the negotiations and decline to fund the award.

SSA expects to announce the results of this competition in September 2024. SSA will provide successful applicants with a Notice of Award (NoA) that will set forth the amount of the award and other pertinent information. The NoA is the legal document issued to notify an applicant that an award has been made. The NoA will be sent through the U.S. Postal Service to the applicant listed on the SF-424; a copy will also be sent to the electronic mail address listed on the SF-424. The applicant's signature on the SF-424, including electronic signature via E-Authentication on <http://www.grants.gov>, constitutes a binding offer by the applicant. Note that any communication between SSA and applicants prior to the issuance of the NoA and prior to the execution of any award agreement is not authorization to begin performance on the project.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of their status by letter, which will likewise be sent through the U.S. Postal Service to the applicant listed on the SF-424. Unsuccessful applicants may not protest SSA's decision. However, unsuccessful applicants may ask for specific feedback and apply under subsequent RFAs.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Successful applicants selected for awards must agree to comply with additional applicable legal requirements upon acceptance of an award. All cooperative agreements are subject to the Office of Management and Budget's regulatory requirements for cooperative agreements codified in the Uniform Guidance. Recipients and, if applicable, sub-recipients must agree as part of their award

## VI. Award Administration Information

agreement to comply with all requirements under 2 CFR Part 200, as applicable. SSA does not expect that the cost principles in Subpart E of 2 CFR Part 200 will be applicable, except with regard to federal funding for the independent evaluator.

### 1) Administrative Program Requirements

Awards under this RFA are subject to federal laws, regulations, and policies concerning cooperative agreements. Below is a non-exhaustive list of requirements with which the applicant will need to comply:

- Lobbying Restrictions at 31 CFR Part 21.
- Government-wide Debarment and Suspension Requirements at 31 CFR Part 19.
- Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace at 31 CFR Part 20.
- Award Term for Trafficking in Persons at 2 CFR Part 175.

### 2) Safeguarding Data including PII

Applicants submitting applications in response to this RFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to SSA and must be observed. Recipients shall comply with all applicable laws and the terms of any agreements and contracts governing such PII.

If an applicant's recruitment, implementation, or evaluation strategies require SSA data, the application must clearly identify it so that SSA can determine whether it will be possible to provide the data during the period of performance. Any request for SSA data must explain the data sought (to the extent known), why it is needed, and any potential need to re-disclose data to any entity other than the requester. The applicant should also consider if they plan to request written authorization from research participants for SSA to share their data, or if we will need to determine whether SSA could rely on other legal authorities to disclose certain limited data to the recipient for research purposes.

Certain data cannot be shared with recipients under any circumstances (such as earnings outcomes based on the Master Earnings File (60-0059)). SSA will only provide the minimum PII necessary for a given project or evaluation, as permitted by applicable Federal laws, regulations, and directives.

SSA cannot guarantee that the data requested will be available or able to be disclosed to the recipient. Example systems of records from which data may be authorized to be disclosed include<sup>8</sup>:

- 60-0320 – Electronic Disability Claim File
- 60-0089 – Claims Folder System

As necessary, SSA will also make available limited staff time to support the evaluation of projects, particularly for data that cannot be shared with recipients under any circumstances (such as earnings outcomes based on the Master Earnings File (60-0059)).

Depending on the intervention plans proposed and whether SSA data will be disclosed to the recipient, SSA may include award terms requiring compliance with, or assistance with complying with, any applicable laws, policies, and procedures, including the non-exhaustive list below:

- The Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, 44 U.S.C. § 3541, as amended by the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-283.
- The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a.
- Executive Order 13556 and 32 C.F.R. Part 2002, governing Controlled Unclassified Information.
- The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Revised, 44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq.
- 20 C.F.R. Part 431, Protection of Human Subjects.
- E-Government Act of 2002, P. Law 107-347, including the need to conduct Privacy Impact Assessments and Privacy Threshold Analysis for information or information systems.

8 See <https://www.ssa.gov/privacy/sorn.html> for additional systems of record and their allowable (routine) uses.

## VI. Award Administration Information

- Information security and privacy requirements, such as:
  - ◆ Physical location and data jurisdiction requirements;
  - ◆ Data protection requirements, including but not limited to inventory, manufacturer support for software, encryption, media transport, boundary protection, configuration baseline, securing emailing, and digital service requirements;
  - ◆ Data access, use, and disclosure restrictions;
  - ◆ Risk remediation, continuous monitoring, and security assessment and authorization requirements; and
  - ◆ Requirements for Cloud-Based solutions or technology, to include but not limited to the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) and SSA authorization requirements.
- Incident response requirements, relating to security and PII breach and incident reporting, whether an incident is suspected or confirmed.
- Federal records and data retention, inspection, and disposal requirements.
- Security audit requirements.
- Suitability requirements for background investigations of personnel requiring access to sensitive sites, systems, and/or information.

The above list is not exhaustive, nor a complete explanation of a given requirement, which will be further detailed in resulting awards. All recipients will need to undergo an Authority to Operate (ATO) review by SSA, which will consider all data collection activities, data storage, data requests, and systems security plans. This may require significant time on the recipient end to provide a thorough review to SSA of the systems and processes the recipient will use to collect, store, and/or analyze any participant data, particularly if the recipient plans to receive any data from SSA.

In all cases that privacy, security, and data-related requirements apply, the recipient shall include all privacy and security requirements in any sub-award or contract related to performance of work under the award.

### 3) Intellectual property rights

Intellectual property rights relating to the activities of the recipient and all partners in the project, including the evaluator, intermediary, and service provider(s) are subject to 2 C.F.R. § 200.315.

Work Product Ownership and Rights in Data will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should include in their proposals to SSA any specific rights or ownership requested or claimed over the data or work product to be used, collected, or developed.

### 4) Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Clearance of Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) materials

Due to the nature of the ICAP project, it is likely that proposed projects will contain plans to collect or record either information calling for answers to identical questions from 10 or more persons other than Federal employees, or information from Federal employees, which is outside the scope of their employment, for use by the Federal government or disclosure to third parties. Therefore, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq.) shall apply to this award. No plan, questionnaire, interview guide or other similar device for collecting information (whether repetitive or single time) may be used without the prior clearance of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The SSA Reports Clearance Officer (RCO) is the authorized individual for obtaining OMB clearance for the agency working with the Program Officer and the recipient.

The recipient shall not begin any data collection nor expend any funds associated with the data collection until receiving the OMB clearance. Once the SSA RCO receives the OMB clearance, the Project Officer shall provide the recipient a notification authorizing the collection of data.

Under the PRA, the recipient shall prepare a data collection package for all data collections associated with the project for submission to the SSA Project Officer for review and approval. The SSA Project Officer will submit the package to SSA's Office of Reports Clearance for review and approval. The Office of Reports Clearance will submit the package to OMB for review and approval. The OMB

## VI. Award Administration Information

PRA data collection package will include but is not limited to:

- All data collection instruments proposed by the recipient and,
- All materials and forms developed by the recipient to obtain consent.

The recipient shall be responsible for designing the data collection instruments included in the OMB Data Collection Package. The recipient shall allow at least three weeks for the OMB PRA Generic Clearance process to obtain approval of any survey instrument pretests. The recipient shall allot at least an additional five months for the OMB PRA Standard Clearance to gain approval of the any final field survey data activities. During its period of performance, the recipient shall clearly identify any problems and specify any suggested modifications to survey, and/or data collections inquiries or procedures that may require further OMB clearance. With the guidance of the Project Officer, the recipient shall prepare the PRA clearance material required for submission to OMB, including any necessary Privacy Act statements.

At the SSA Project Officer's discretion, the recipient shall participate in any briefings with OMB on the data collection packages. The recipient shall also be prepared to assist with all necessary forms and materials, and participate in any other activities necessary to obtain OMB clearance on the package. While SSA retains the ultimate responsibility for obtaining OMB approval, the draft package will assist in that process. Critical components of the OMB package for which the recipient is responsible include:

- The supporting statement;
- Detailed questionnaire descriptions;
- Consent forms, to be signed by all respondents, explaining the voluntary nature of the study and the rights of the respondent;
- Notification correspondence (e.g., letters emails, and phone scripts);
- Burden tables; and
- Copies of the final data collection instruments in English and Spanish (and other versions to be determined).

The supporting statement shall include: (1) justification -- necessity of information collected, purpose for using the information, efforts to reduce the burden of responding, efforts to identify and reduce duplication, assurance of confidentiality, estimates of collection burden, and plans for tabulation, statistical analysis, and publication; and (2) statistical methods -- potential respondent universe and sampling method, procedures for collecting information, methods to maximize response rates, and tests of procedures or methods. The recipient shall consult with the SSA Project Officer during preparation of the draft OMB clearance package to ensure that all required elements are included.

The recipient shall submit draft OMB package(s) to the SSA Project Officer for review and comment. The recipient shall submit revised package(s) consistent with SSA's review and comments for OMB submission to the SSA Project Officer after SSA clears all study consent forms. SSA will submit revised package(s) to OMB. If OMB requests revisions, the recipient shall submit a revised package that addresses these comments.

If the SSA Project Officer, in consultation with the recipient, determines additional data collection activities are required, the recipient shall submit to the SSA Project Officer all the materials required for an amendment. The recipient shall make every effort to anticipate such data collection activities and include them in the initial OMB package submission. SSA will consider an OMB PRA Data Collection Package finalized after receiving formal clearance and approval from OMB.

The recipient shall use the OMB-approved data collection tools throughout the study. When appropriate, subsequent revisions to the tools must be approved by the SSA Project Officer and subsequently OMB. The recipient shall coordinate the tools to allow enough time for processing to meet reporting deadlines.

The recipient shall confirm with the SSA Project Officer that IRB (and OMB) approval has been granted before any contact is made with prospective study participants or respondents.

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### 5) Environmental Requirements

SSA approval of financial assistance is subject to compliance with applicable federal and State environmental requirements. The applicant must identify the State and federal environmental laws, regulations, and policies that may apply to the project and the environmental documents that may be required under State and federal laws. As to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), specifically, project applications will be evaluated in accordance with SSA's NEPA procedures and categorical exclusions. Recipients whose projects do not fall within SSA's categorical exclusions will be required to assist SSA in conducting an Environmental Analysis and an Environmental Impact Statement for the project, as applicable.

### 6) Non-discrimination Laws and Regulations

All recipients, partners, and sub-recipients, if applicable, must comply with applicable non-discrimination statutes and regulations. These include but are not limited to:

- a. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000-2000d7), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color of national origin, and SSA's implementing regulations, 31 CFR part 22;
- b. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1681-1683, and 1685-1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex;
- c. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, and SSA's implementing regulations, 31 CFR part 28;
- d. the Individuals with Disabilities Act, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.);
- e. the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6101-6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, and SSA's implementing regulations, 31 CFR part 23;
- f. the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse;
- g. the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism;
- h. Section 523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. 290dd-3 and 290ee-3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; and
- i. Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing.

### 7) Other Requirements

Recipients must comply with existing laws and regulations governing the subject area of the project and the relevant federal agency administering the project. If the intervention design requires exceptions to any such existing laws and regulations, the applicant must obtain a waiver from the governing federal, State, or local agency.

### 8) Transparency Act Requirements

Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-282, as amended by § 6202 of P.L. 110-252) (Transparency Act). All applicants, except for those excepted from the Transparency Act, must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the sub-award and executive total compensation reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, should they receive funding. Upon award, applicants will receive detailed information on the reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, as described in 2 CFR Part 170, Appendix A. No sub-award of an award made under this RFA may be made to a sub-recipient that is subject to the terms of the Transparency Act unless that potential sub-recipient acquires and provides a Unique Entity ID.

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### 9) Use of Contracts and Sub-awards

You must abide by the following definitions of contract, contractor, sub-award, and sub-recipient:

- **Contract:** Contract means a legal instrument by which a non-federal entity (defined as a state, local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education (IHE), nonprofit organization, or for-profit entity, that carries out a federal award as a recipient or sub-recipient) purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a federal award. The term as used in this RFA does not include a legal instrument, even if the non-federal entity considers it a contract when the substance of the transaction meets the definition of a federal award or sub-award (see definition of Sub-award below).
- **Contractor:** Contractor means an entity that receives a contract as defined above in Contract.
- **Sub-award:** Sub-award means an award provided by a pass-through entity (defined as a non-Federal entity that provides a sub-award to a sub-recipient to carry out part of a federal program) to a sub-recipient for the sub-recipient to carry out part of a federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a federal program. A sub-award may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract.
- **Sub-recipient:** Sub-recipient means a non-federal entity that receives a sub-award from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. A sub-recipient may also be a recipient of other federal awards directly from a federal awarding agency.

You must follow the provisions at 2 CFR 200.331-332 regarding sub-recipient monitoring and management. Also see 2 CFR 200.308(c)(6) regarding prior approval requirements for sub-awards. When awarding sub-awards, you are required to comply with provisions on government wide suspension and debarment found at 2 CFR Part 180.

- **Closeout of Cooperative Agreement Award**

Any entity that receives an award under this Announcement must close its cooperative agreement with SSA at the end of the final year of the cooperative agreement.

## C. Special Program Requirements

### 1) Access to Records/Oversight

By accepting a project award under this RFA, the recipient agrees to make available to SSA or any of their authorized representatives, all data and documents that might be needed for audits, evaluation, performance measurement or any other purpose, including contracts and agreements, regardless of whether outcomes are achieved, and payment is received, in the recipient's possession or available to the recipient. Recipients must also agree to provide timely and reasonable access to program operating personnel, project partners, and participants. It is critical that recipients keep this information up to date and accurate for performance measurement, evaluation, and auditing purposes. Recipients may be required to: (1) provide access to pertinent documents; (2) host site visits; (3) facilitate interviews with recipient staff, partners, and the independent evaluator; (4) attend recipient meetings; and (5) provide additional data related to the intervention and evaluation of the intervention.

### 2) Changes to the Statement of Work (Project Narrative)

Upon grant of an award, the project narrative, with any changes negotiated before notice of award, will become the cooperative agreement's statement of work. SSA at its sole discretion may approve revisions to the statement of work in writing. Changes to the intervention strategy and source of up-front project funding may be made with prior written approval from SSA. To start this process, a recipient must timely notify the project officer of these changes as they occur and provide appropriate documentation to update the statement of work.

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### D. Administrative reporting

Recipients must agree to meet the reporting requirements as listed below or as specified in the award agreement. Administrative reports must be submitted electronically to SSA, as specified in the award agreement.

#### 1) Quarterly financial reports

A Standard Form 425; Federal Financial Form (FFR) is required until such time as all funds have been expended or the cooperative agreement period of performance has expired. Quarterly reports are due 30 days after the end of each calendar year quarter. In addition, recipients must include any sub-award amounts so we can calculate final indirect costs, if applicable.

#### 2) Quarterly performance reports

Recipients must submit a quarterly progress report within 30 days after the end of each calendar year quarter. The report must include quarterly information on cooperative agreement activities, performance goals, and milestones. Information collected from self-monitoring, including required programmatic data elements, must be included in these reports and must include information on the use of cooperative agreement funding and an assessment of model implementation, lessons learned, quality improvements, services provided, and cost estimates. Specific, required programmatic data elements will be determined by SSA.

The last quarterly progress report will serve as the recipient's Final Performance Report. This report must provide both quarterly and cumulative information on the cooperative agreement activities. It must summarize project activities, employment outcomes and other work products, and related results of the project, and must thoroughly document the training or labor market information approaches that you used. Submission requirements will be provided to recipients upon award. We will also provide you with guidance about the data and other information that is required to be collected and reported on either a regular basis or special request basis.

### 3) Evaluation progress reports

Reports will be required on the schedule described in the notice of award. This will be as described in the proposal, unless another schedule was negotiated prior to the award. The independent evaluator must submit a written report the SSA Grant Officer summarizing the progress that has been made in the reporting period. Data content requirements will be negotiated through collaboration of SSA and the recipient in the first year of the award.

#### 4) Final evaluation report

After completion of the intervention, within one year, or a time period to be laid out in the notice of agreement, the independent evaluator must submit a final report to SSA. The time period and content will be negotiated through collaboration of SSA and the recipient in the first year of the award.

At a minimum, the report must assess the effects of the intervention and include a discussion of the findings and implications, as well as a definitive statement about whether the predetermined outcomes have been met and whether the recipient has fulfilled each obligation of the agreement. This must include information on the unique factors that contributed to the achievement or failure to achieve outcomes, including but not limited to any major change in policy or law that may have affected the project intervention, a description of the research methods, e.g., randomization of treatment and control groups, if applicable, data, sample size and characteristics, measures, and other factors, as well as findings, including impacts – for exploratory and confirmatory, short and long-term, subgroup analyses, and other findings. The report must include both qualitative and quantitative findings as applicable for the proposed project, including, if applicable, how the project benefitted the participants and could benefit the wider population of current and future DI or SSI beneficiaries.

The report must also assess whether, and the degree to which the project was delivered as intended. This must include a discussion of how closely the project's theory and intended procedures aligned with actual project implementation. This portion of the report must include information related to the intervention model, including whether it has evolved and whether the intervention was delivered with fidelity; staffing; recruitment and identification and screening of participants;



## I. Program Description

selection and enrollment; and how the intervention was implemented

The report must include a cost-benefit analysis breaking out the costs and benefits to relevant stakeholders over the course of the project and, if possible, for up to 10 years afterward.

This report will be made publicly available. Although the term “report” is used, the recipient and evaluator may propose multiple reports or alternative documentation of the findings to fulfill the requirements of the award, as described in the proposal and agreed to by SSA.

privileged or confidential, the pages containing that information must be identified as such.

When such information is included in the application, it is furnished to the Federal government in confidence, with the understanding that the information will be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application. SSA will protect the information contained in an application from unauthorized disclosure, consistent with Federal law, including the requirements of 5 U.S.C. § 552 and 20 C.F.R. § 402.90. The Federal government has the right to use or disclose information obtained in connection with this RFA and resulting awards to the extent authorized by law.

## E. Record retention

Applicants must be prepared to agree to follow federal guidelines on record retention, which require recipients to maintain all records pertaining to cooperative agreement activities for a period of not less than three years from the time of final cooperative agreement close-out unless records are transferred to or maintained by the Federal agency. SSA will include terms in any award explaining which records must be transferred to or are maintained by SSA.

## B. Information Collection Requirements

Information requirements gathered via the SF-424 family of forms have already been approved under the following OMB control numbers: Information for Federal Assistance covered under 4040-0004, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs covered under 4040-0006, Budget Information for Construction Programs covered under 4040-0008, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities covered under 4040-0013, Assurance for Non-Construction Programs covered under 4040-0007, Assurance for Construction Programs covered under 4040-0009 and Key Contacts, Project Abstract and Project/Performance Site Location covered under 4040-0010.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For further information about this RFA, please contact the SSA Grants Team at [Grants.Team@ssa.gov](mailto:Grants.Team@ssa.gov). Include ICAP 2024 Inquiry to the subject line.

## VIII. Other information

### A. Proprietary Information

Applicants are discouraged from submitting information considered proprietary unless it is deemed essential for proper evaluation of the application. However, if the application contains information that the applicant organization considers to be trade secrets, information that is commercial or financial, or information that is