

## Office of Community Services (OCS)

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Office of Community Services works in partnership with states, tribes, territories, communities, and other agencies to provide a range of human and economic development services and activities which address the causes and characteristics of poverty and otherwise assist persons in need. The aim of these services and activities is to increase the capacity of individuals and families to become self-sufficient, to revitalize communities, and to build the stability and capacity of children, youth, and families so that they become able to create their own opportunities.

### **MAJOR GOAL**

Office of Community Services Programs:

- Provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities through industrial, business, physical or commercial development;
- Promote individual self-sufficiency through the creation of new, full-time, permanent jobs;
- assist community development corporations and community action agencies in leveraging existing Federal, State and local resources for neighborhood revitalization activities;
- Provide financial and technical resources to State, local, public and private agencies for economic development and related social service support activities;
- Provide energy assistance to low-income households;
- Provide matching funds for purchasing a first home, capitalizing a business, or finishing secondary education; and
- Provide training, technical assistance and financial assistance to help faith-based and community organizations increase their effectiveness and enhance their ability to provide social services to those most in need in their communities.

### **PROGRAMS**

With a budget of approximately \$10 billion, OCS disburses block and discretionary grants to states, tribes, territories and a network of community-based and faith-based organizations. OCS is comprised of three programmatic divisions – the Divisions of State

Assistance, Community Discretionary Programs, and Energy Assistance – as well as the Assets for Independence Program and the Compassion Capital Fund.

### ***Division of State Assistance***

- ***Community Services Block Grant Program.*** This is a mandatory formula grant to 50 States, the District of Columbia, five territories, and 56 Native American tribes. Grant recipients work to ameliorate the causes of poverty by assisting low-income individuals with employment, education, and adequate housing. Grant recipients assist low-income individuals to make better use of their income, solve problems that are blocking the achievement of self-sufficiency, and obtain emergency health services, food, housing, and employment-related assistance. This program was funded at \$700 billion in regular fiscal year 2010 funds. The program received an additional \$1 billion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) appropriations.
- ***Social Services Block Grant Program.*** This block grant provides funds to 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five territories and insular areas for the provision of social services directed towards achieving economic self-sufficiency, preventing or correcting neglect, abuse, or the exploitation of children and adults, preventing or reducing inappropriate institutionalization, and securing referrals for institutional care. Funded at \$1.7 billion in fiscal year 2010 in regular block grant funds, each State has the flexibility to determine what services will be provided and then either provides services directly or purchases them from qualified providers. Selected States also received a supplemental amount of \$600 million in fiscal year 2009 to provide social services to individuals affected by presidentially-declared natural disasters which occurred in 2008, and \$550 million in supplemental FY 2005 funds to address the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.
- ***Empowerment Zones / Enterprise Communities.*** This block grant program provides flexible grants for comprehensive community renewal projects in urban neighborhoods and rural areas designated as Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities. The local-level renewal organizations provide the grant funds to neighborhood based service providers for a wide variety of activities, including job training and placement; business assistance and economic development; childcare, after-school care and youth development; substance abuse treatment; health care services; and other supports for working families. While \$1 billion was originally disbursed in 1994, this program was still in final implementation stages, and to be closed out in December FY 2010.

### ***Division of Community Discretionary Programs***

- ***Community Economic Development Program.*** Community Economic Development (CED) discretionary grants are awarded to nonprofit community development corporations in disinvested communities for purposes of creating new jobs for low-income individuals, including Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families (TANF) recipients. These grants serve as catalysts for attracting additional private and public dollars; for every CED dollar awarded, three-to-five dollars is leveraged. The Community Economic Development grant funds projects such as: business incubators, shopping centers, manufacturing businesses, and agriculture initiatives. \$36 million was appropriated in fiscal year 2010.

- ***Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals Program.*** Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals (JOLI) discretionary grants are awarded to nonprofit organizations to implement a range of job creation strategies. This is a small, highly competitive program. Approximately 10 grants are awarded each year. Job creation strategies for the JOLI program are through self-employment, micro-enterprise, new business ventures and business expansion. \$2.6 million was appropriated in fiscal year 2010.
- ***Rural Community Facilities Program.*** The Rural Community Facilities Discretionary Grant Program provides discretionary grants which assist low-income communities in developing affordable, safe water and wastewater treatment facilities. Six Regional grantees and one Tribal grantee provide services to multiple States. The philosophy of the program is to develop indigenous leadership so that the facilities will be sustained over the long term. While the program does not pay to construct or upgrade facilities, staffs of these programs assist communities in accessing funds for these purposes.

This program also funds the Rural Community Development Activities Program/Homeland Security Program, which supports and promotes water and wastewater treatment systems safety through security and emergency preparedness training and technical assistance to small community water and wastewater utility staff and local officials. \$10 million was appropriated in fiscal year 2010.

### ***Division of Energy Assistance***

- ***Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.*** The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a block grant program administered by States, territories and Tribes through a network of local community-based organizations. The purpose of LIHEAP is to assist low-income households meet their home energy costs. \$5.1 billion was appropriated in fiscal year 2010. 50 States, the District of Columbia, five territories, and approximately 140 Tribes and Tribal organizations receive LIHEAP grants each year. State and Federally recognized Tribes (including Alaska native villages) may apply for direct LIHEAP funding. A supplemental amount of \$590 million in fiscal year 2010 was awarded to States to address unforeseen energy crises due to emergencies.
- ***Leveraging Incentive Program.*** The law authorizes supplemental Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding for grantees that acquired

non-Federal leveraged resources for their LIHEAP programs in the preceding fiscal year.

- **Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Option (REACH) Program.** The law authorizes supplemental LIHEAP funding for grantees to receive competitive grants for implementation through local community-based agencies of innovative plans to help LIHEAP eligible households reduce their energy vulnerability.

### *Assets for Independence*

- The **Assets for Independence (AFI)** program is demonstrating and testing the effectiveness of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) as a tool for enabling low-income individuals and families to become economically self-sufficient. Participating individuals attend financial literacy classes to learn money management, and they save earned income and receive matching funds in their IDA with the goal of acquiring any of three assets: a first home, a business, or post-secondary education. AFI awards grants and provides training and technical assistance to community-based nonprofits and State, local and Tribal government agencies that implement IDA projects. Congress appropriated \$24.5 million for the program in fiscal year 2010. OCS currently administers grants for more than 400 AFI projects throughout the nation. The program has an active portfolio of upwards of \$100 million in grant funding.

### *Compassion Capital Fund*

- The **Compassion Capital Fund (CCF)** which was created in 2002, helps faith-based and community organizations increase their effectiveness and enhance their ability to provide social services in their communities. In FY 2010, no monies were appropriated to CCF. However, \$42.7 million was distributed in FY 2009 through CCF which distributes funds through two competitive grant programs:
  - The CCF Demonstration Program works through intermediary organizations that serve as a bridge between the Federal government and the faith-based and community organizations on which the program focuses; these intermediaries provide technical assistance and financial sub-awards to local organizations to help increase their capacity.
  - The CCF Communities Empowering Youth (CEY) program is designed to increase the capacity of community coalitions working to combat gang activity and youth violence.

The CCF Targeted Capacity Building Program was last funded on FY 2007. These grants were one-time 12-month capacity-building grants of \$50,000 each directly to faith-based and community organizations to build the capacity of their own organizations.

## *Strengthening Communities Fund*

- The **Strengthening Communities Fund** (SCF) which was created in the 2009 Recovery Act, helps faith-based and community organizations increase their effectiveness and enhance their ability to provide social services to address broad economic recovery issues present in communities. \$50 million was appropriated to SCF, which distributes competitive grants through two programs:
  - **Nonprofit Capacity-Building Program** – Makes awards of up to \$1 million to lead organizations to provide nonprofit project partners with capacity building training, technical assistance and competitive financial assistance.
  - **State, Local and Tribal Government Capacity Building Program** – Provides awards up to \$250,000 to State, local or tribal government offices responsible for community and faith-based efforts, including to support start-up efforts, to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations.

No additional funds were allocated in FY 2010, but grants continued to operate.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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