



## North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

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Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director  
(919) 733-3055

September 15, 2006

### **DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

#### **SUBJECT: Work First Demonstration Grants**

The Division issued a Dear County Director letter on August 16, 2006 that provided advanced notice regarding Work First Demonstration Grants. The Division is pleased to announce the availability of the Work First Grants and provide the guidelines for awarding these grants.

The North Carolina General Assembly appropriated approximately \$19 million dollars in TANF funds over a three year period for demonstration grants to County Departments of Social Services. The purpose of the grants is to identify best practices that can improve the work participation rates. The Division has been informed that approximately \$6 million dollars will be available in grants each of the three years.

With the passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), we are being challenged more than ever to place our clients into employment opportunities. Changes in work requirements and documentation of hours will require diligence in the development of the Mutual Responsibility Agreement. As you know, the base year for the calculation of the caseload reduction credit changed from 1995 to 2005. This is an important consideration as in the past several years we have met the 50% participation rate only as a result of the addition of the credit to our actual rate. With this change, North Carolina like all states faces challenges to meet the required work participation rates. The General Assembly recognized those challenges and provided county departments of social services with an opportunity to have latitude to be creative in our approaches to increase work participation rates.

The Division is encouraging counties to submit your statement of interest in helping North Carolina meet our goals in achieving the required work participation rates. Due to the transient Work First population, we as a state must maintain a certain level over the required 50% and 90% participation rates. If North Carolina does not meet the required participation rates, federal regulations provide for a financial penalty that would affect all of us.

If you have an interest, your agency will need to submit a plan that details how you will increase the work participation rates in your county, which in turn will help North Carolina meet our required participation rates. If your plan of action requires participation of community partners and consumers, you will need to have them assist in the development of the plan. You will find an outline attached for the development and submission of your grant plan. We do not intend for this to be a cumbersome process, but we will need to be detailed in our process of providing these grants to ensure that we can identify the best practices and be able to report them to the General Assembly. In addition to the narrative outline, a simple budget of expenditures is required. We acknowledge that your plan is subject to some changes that you may not be able to anticipate, however we encourage you to include the general scope of your proposed work to the level of detail that you can provide at this time.

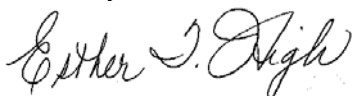
Attached you will find the Terms and Conditions, which is an integral part of your local grant plan. If community partners and consumers are part of your action steps or strategies, they will need to review the Terms and Conditions and sign it as a part of applying for the grant. No maximum or minimum amount has been set for grant awards. Your proposed local plan should determine the amount needed to accomplish your work. In the event that plans exceed the amount of funding, negotiations may occur to accommodate all approved plans. The grants may extend throughout the three year period contingent upon meeting the participation rates. We will request monthly documentation order to assure that we are moving forth with meeting our participation rates. Consideration will be given to counties who submit grant proposals that can have a positive impact on meeting the State's participation rates. We plan to send the grant awards through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to those counties who are awarded the grants. The amount of funds transferred will be based on the negotiated budget. We will be employing two time limited positions to work with counties to manage the grant award process and monitor the demonstration projects.

For those counties who choose not to submit a proposal due to perhaps the small Work First population in your county, a mini-grant or incentive will be provided to you if your agency exceeds your established baseline in assisting the State to meet the required participation rates. It is crucial that every county work hard to increase the participation rates since one or two individuals added to the numerator aides North Carolina in meeting our goals. More details regarding the mini-grants/incentives will be forthcoming.

**Please submit your proposals to Johnice Tabron, at MSC 2407, by October 6, 2006.** We will review the proposals and inform counties who have been awarded the grants by October 13, 2006. If you have any questions, please call Johnice Tabron at 919-733-7831 or email her at [johnice.tabron@ncmail.net](mailto:johnice.tabron@ncmail.net).

We appreciate your interest in this important grant opportunity.

Sincerely,



Esther T. High, Acting Chief  
Family Support and Child Welfare Section

cc: Sherry Bradsher  
Jo Ann Lamm  
Sarah Barham  
Hank Bowers  
Family Support & Child Welfare Services Team Leaders  
Children's Program Representatives  
Work First Representatives

**FSCWS-53-06**

**Work First Demonstration Grant Proposal Outline is expected to include at a minimum the following:**

1. What are your goals for your demonstration project? What are your projected increases in the all family and two parent participation rates?
2. What are the outcome measures you will want to examine and how will you measure progress in this year and in the next three years?
3. Briefly describe your plan for implementation. Include your action steps and strategies to increase the work participation rates.
4. How does this grant proposal enhance current service delivery?
5. What is the anticipated timeframe for implementation?
6. If you involve community partners in the grant proposal, describe your relations with them and include how they will be kept informed of their progress.
7. Provide a budget of expenditures to support your grant effort.

**Terms and Conditions and Required Signatures**

By signing below, the applicant understands and accepts the terms and conditions for enhancing practice to increase the required Work First work participation rates as outlined in this document.

1. Agree to establish a plan with action steps and strategies to enhance not only the individual county but the State's required work participation rates.
2. Agree to work to identify best practices to achieve work participation rates through the use of the grant to share with all other counties.
3. Agree to negotiate a number higher than the 50% and 90% rates to maintain a certain level over the established participation rates that allows the State to always meet the required rates.
4. Agree to work with assigned Division staff to monitor and ensure compliance with the grant funds to support the work of the grant.
5. Agree to use the grant funds to support the legislative intent set out to increase participation rates.
6. Agree to follow all the reporting requirements which will include monthly reports to reflect progress.
7. If community partners and consumers are a part of the plan, agree to meet regularly to discuss progress.
8. Participate in all other required activities related to the grant.

Signed:

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Director of Department of Social Services