



**A Primer for State Aging and  
Disability Directors**

# THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATES UNITED FOR AGING AND DISABILITIES (NASUAD)** was founded in 1964 under the name National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA). In 2010, the organization changed its name to NASUAD in an effort to formally recognize the work that the state agencies were undertaking in the field of disability policy and advocacy. Today, NASUAD represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities and supports visionary state leadership, the advancement of state systems innovation and the articulation of national policies that support home and community based services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers. The mission of the organization is to design, improve and sustain state systems delivering home and community based services and supports for people who are older or have a disability, and their caregivers. For more information, contact: NASUAD, 1201 15th Street, NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 898-2578, Fax (202) 898-2583.

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## INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to enable State Aging and Disability Directors to quickly understand the unique role of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

The Senior Community Service Employment Program, or Title V—Community Service Employment for Older Americans (CSEOA) as it is referred to in the Older Americans Act—is the only federally mandated job training program that explicitly serves low-income adults, age 55 years and older. SCSEP has a rich history of serving some of the most disadvantaged older persons in the country, including minorities and those with low-incomes and limited education. And although the name of the Senior Community Service Employment Program has changed throughout its fifty year history, its core mission remains constant: empowering older persons to improve their economic well-being and employability through community service work employment.

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# HISTORY

The Senior Community Service Employment Program was first funded in 1965 as a demonstration project called *Operation Mainstream*. Authorized under Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Operation Mainstream funded a few national organizations to provide job opportunities for chronically unemployed, poor adults—older Americans were one of the targeted groups served by this project.

In the 1973 amendments to the Older Americans Act (OAA), the older worker component of Operation Mainstream was converted from a pilot project to an established program

under Title IX of the OAA. This amendment allowed the Department of Labor (DOL) to grant funds, not only to the national, non-profit organizations that had been running the pilot, but also to the states. Amendments in 1978 redesignated SCSEP as Title V of the OAA, which is where the program’s authorization comes from today.

## The Senior Community Service Employment Program is designed to:

“[F]oster individual economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities (which shall include community service employment) for unemployed low-income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects, and to increase the number of persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors [...].”<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Labor currently administers SCSEP, however, the Fiscal Year 2012 President’s budget request has proposed that the program be moved to the Administration on Aging, within the Department of Health and Human Services. According to the FY 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, the proposed transfer will result in better coordination between SCSEP and other programs for low-income seniors.<sup>2</sup> The Administration also noted that SCSEP (Title V of the OAA) is the only Title of the OAA which is not administered by the Administration on Aging, thus, this move will bring all of the OAA programs under the jurisdiction of one agency.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Senior Community Service Employment Program has two primary goals:

1. Advance economic self-sufficiency for program participants through employment training and job placement; and
2. Promote useful opportunities for community service activities through community service employment partnerships.

The program has strict eligibility requirements for participants. Only individuals who are 55 or older, unemployed, and have a total family income of less than 125 percent of federal poverty level (\$13,613 for a single person household in 2011) are eligible to participate in the program.<sup>3</sup> In addition, SCSEP grants priority enrollment first to veterans and their qualified spouses, then to individuals who are 65 and older, or:

- Have a disability,
- Have limited English proficiency,
- Have low literacy skills,
- Live in a rural area,
- Have low employment prospects,
- Are unable to find employment through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, or
- Are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Once an individual is enrolled in SCSEP they are placed in community service assignments at host agencies where they work an average of 20 hours a week for minimum wage (federal, or state, whichever is highest). The participant's wage is subsidized by SCSEP funding, not by the host agency—a 501(c)(3) non-profit or government entity. The host agency benefits because they are given a worker whose wages are paid by an outside entity and the SCSEP participant benefits because they are gaining job skills and training.<sup>4</sup>

## Durational Limit

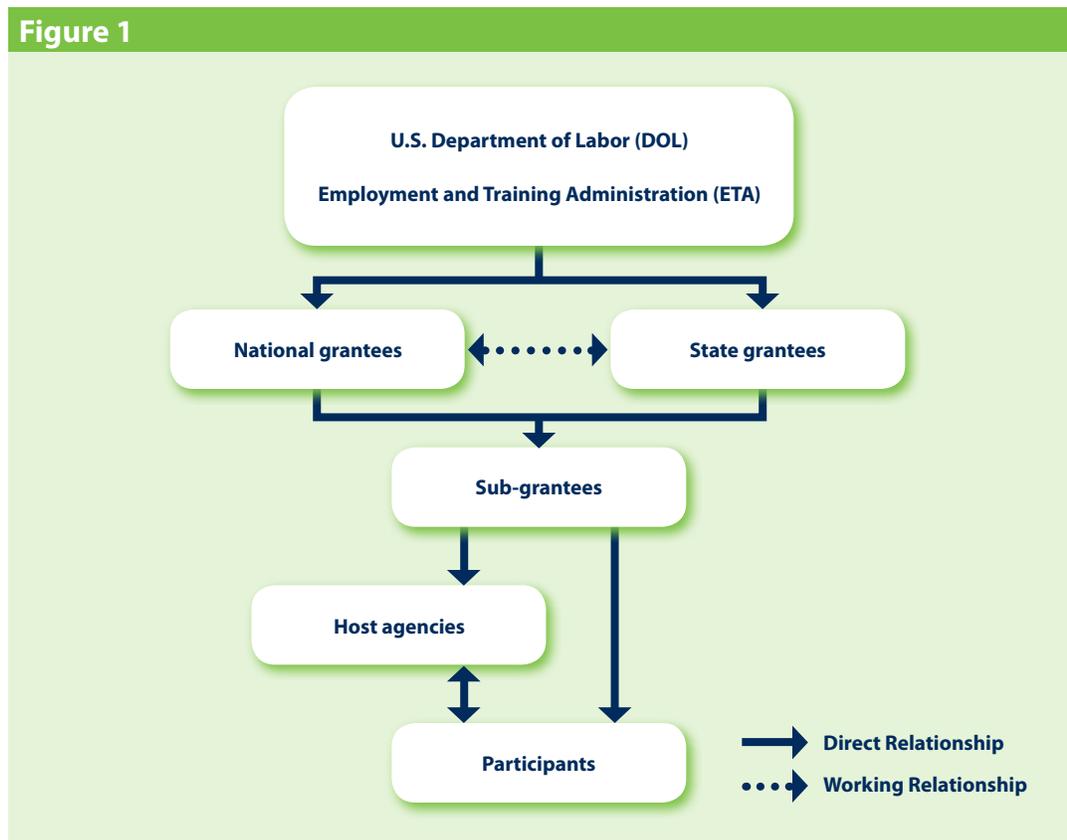
Participants may remain in the SCSEP program for a maximum of 48 months. During the 2006 reauthorization of the OAA, a new *individual durational limit* was enacted for SCSEP participants. This limits a person's lifetime participation in the program to a total of 48 months. The clock for individual durational limits began July 1, 2007; thus on July 1, 2011, SCSEP participants who had been continuously enrolled in the program for four years met their lifetime limit for participation and were provided with a 30 day termination notice. Participants were given information on additional resources including access to volunteer opportunities.

SCSEP participants may be given a program waiver to extend their individual durational limit beyond 48 months. Each state and national SCSEP grantee determines which waiver factors, if any, they will accept allowing participants who have reached their durational limit for the program to continue receiving services. Qualifying waiver factors include:

- Severe disability;
- Frail;
- 75 years of age or older;
- Low literacy skills;
- Old enough for, but not receiving, Social Security Title II;
- Severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment; and
- Limited English proficiency.

# STRUCTURE

The Senior Community Service Employment Program is a coordinated program that operates at the local, state, and national level. This section outlines the structure of agency involvement at each level and includes detailed information outlining the responsibilities each entity has concerning administration of the program. The chart in **Figure 1** describes the relationships between each entity.



## Federal Level

Every five years Congress is tasked with the reauthorization of the OAA, which includes Title V—SCSEP. The next reauthorization is scheduled in the Fall of 2011. Title V is the only program in the OAA that is administered by the DOL, all other OAA programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging (AoA). The Secretary of DOL is required to coordinate with the Assistant Secretary of Aging when reviewing the four-year state SCSEP strategic plan, and before issuing a rule or establishing policy.

The SCSEP program is administered by the DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Within ETA, the Division of Adult Services (DAS) has an Older Worker Team which oversees and manages the program.

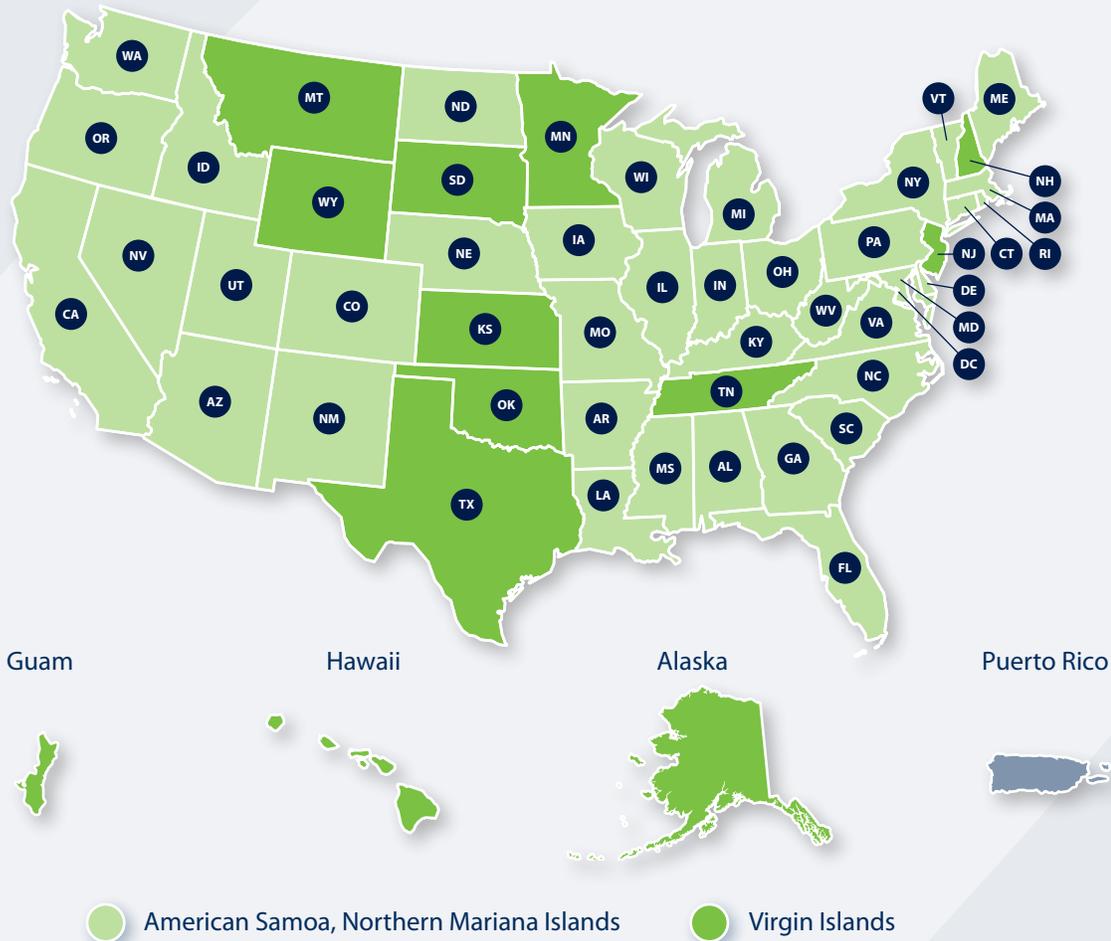
Currently, the Department of Labor grants funding to 18 National organizations and 56 states and territories to administer SCSEP, referred to as State and National Grantees. A list of the 18 National grantees and the states in which they operate can be found in **Appendix A**. Grant implementation and monitoring of State and National grantees is handled by the federal project officers who work in the regional DOL offices across the country.<sup>5</sup>

## State and National Grantees

At the state and territorial level, the placement of SCSEP is decided by the Governor (or the highest government official appointed by the Governor).<sup>6</sup> In 75 percent of the states and territories, the program is placed within the state agency on aging and disabilities; the other 25 percent of states and territories place SCSEP in the state workforce agency; Puerto Rico has their program in a separate government agency (**see Figure 2**). In most states, one or more National SCSEP grantees also operate the program. State and National grantees are responsible for many of the same functions concerning SCSEP; the term "grantee" will be used to refer to both state and national grantees unless otherwise specified.

Grantees have several responsibilities including project planning, financial management, program coordination, and subgrantee management. The State grantees are responsible for preparing an *Equitable Distribution Report* (EDR), usually required twice during the program year. The term "equitable distribution" refers to the process of distributing SCSEP authorized positions so that all eligible persons have reasonable geographical access to the program. The current formula for defining the equitable share of SCSEP positions for each county is based on data received through the U.S. Census—much like the formulas used for other OAA programs. As a part of the planning process, both State and National grantees participate in a meeting to discuss how to equally distribute SCSEP positions across the state on a county-by-county basis.

**Figure 2: Location of the Senior Community Service Employment Programs in States\***



**Within State Unit on Aging:** Alabama, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin

**Within State Workforce Agency:** Alaska, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Islands, Wyoming

**Outside State Unit on Aging and Workforce Agency, but in another government agency:** Puerto Rico

\* Information from the Department of Labor's SCSEP State Grantees document at: [http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html\\_docs/docs/statecontacts.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/docs/statecontacts.cfm)

Every four years the State grantees, in collaboration with the National grantees, are responsible for submitting a strategic state plan to DOL, which outlines the planning and implementation process of the program. The next plan is due in 2012.<sup>7</sup> The plan addresses equitable distribution of authorized slots in the state and outlines a plan to correct any imbalances. The plan also addresses minority populations and populations given priority enrollment status, developing a long-term strategy to better serve these communities. The plan should also make projections concerning future job growth and develop a strategy to place and train SCSEP participants in those occupations, this includes possible changes in the state design of the program. Finally, the plan addresses coordination of SCSEP with the Workforce Investment Act system, labor market and job training initiatives, OAA programs and services, other entities providing services to older Americans, and the National grantees operating within the state.

Language in both the OAA and the Workforce Investment Act requires SCSEP grantees to partner with the One-Stop system to help older job seekers to find employment. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes national, state and local workforce development activities. A network of local One-Stop Career Centers offer services pertaining to employment, including training and assistance, to unemployed adults.<sup>8</sup> The partnership between State SCSEP grantees and local One-Stops should include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by both partners. Grantees must ensure that SCSEP participants in their area are provided with the core services of WIA and registered with the local One-Stop Career Center; grantees must also make sure that eligible and ineligible participants in the SCSEP program are referred to intensive and training services provided through the local One-Stop Career Center.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, State grantees—and most National grantees—work with local organizations for actual program implementation. Grantees manage the work of subgrantees—such as Area Agencies on Aging at the local level—that organize recruitment activities, participant intake,

assessment, and evaluation and collaborate with host agencies that provide participant placements. Grantee management activities include subgrantee training and technical assistance and developing a subgrantee monitoring process which can include reporting systems and on-site reviews. Grantees should create action plans with their subgrantees which outline monthly goals to meet the performance measures outlined in the OAA. The core indicators used to measure grantee/subgrantee performance are:

1. Hours (in the aggregate) of community service employment;
2. Entry into unsubsidized employment;
3. Retention in unsubsidized employment for six months;
4. Earnings;
5. Number of eligible individuals served; and
6. Number of most-in-need individuals served.

State and National grantees use the SPARQ (SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress Report System), an online data collection, performance and case management tool to monitor the work and progress of individual subgrantees and of their SCSEP project as a whole. The SPARQ program is managed by the DOL at the federal level, and is available to all grantees.

Currently, additional indicators which can be measured by grantees/subgrantees are: retention of the former SCSEP participant in unsubsidized employment for one year; and the satisfaction of the participants, employers, and their host agencies with the experiences and services they were provided. It is the responsibility of the grantee to ensure that their subgrantees are meeting these outlined performance measures each quarter. A new indicator will soon be included to measure the number of individuals who volunteer in the community.

## Subgrantees

Subgrantees are responsible for administering the program. This means they work to recruit, enroll, assess, and develop an *Individual Employment Plan* (IEP) for participants; engage with the local One-Stop Career Centers; build relationships with host agencies and place participants in community service assignments; and report to their grantor by documenting case files, adding data, and tracking program performance measures through the SPARQ.

In order to reach as many potential SCSEP participants as possible, subgrantees work with their State or National grantee to develop successful recruitment strategies. Common SCSEP recruitment sites include shopping centers, libraries, grocery stores, banks, post offices, Social Security offices, community organizations, faith based communities, senior expos, job fairs, food banks, senior housing programs, seniors centers, restaurants, and One-Stop Career Centers.

In addition to face-to-face recruitment, subgrantees use advertisements to recruit potential participants, including brochures; mail inserts; direct mailing; flyer/posters; and paid advertisements online, in newspapers and on television. However, word-of-mouth is thought to be the most effective and efficient form of advertisement because former and current participants who enjoyed their experience often tell others about the program.

Once subgrantees have recruited a participant and determined his or her eligibility, the participant is provided with an assessment to determine their interests, occupational preference, skills and training, educational attainment, and any barriers to employment. The assessment information is used to develop an IEP with the participant. The IEP is an agreed to plan with the participant and subgrantee which outlines the occupational preferences and the training needed. A set of established goals with timelines are determined for training; barriers to employment are addressed and supportive services are provided. This information helps to determine an appropriate community service assignment.<sup>10</sup> Supportive services commonly provided to the participant—either by the subgrantee or through referrals to other agencies—include transportation, legal assistance with access to a benefits specialists, subsidized housing, caregiver support, personal and financial counseling, health care, and medical services. Participants may also be offered rent and utility assistance, payment of reasonable costs for transportation and money for incidentals such as uniforms, shoes, badges, safety glasses, and tools.

The IEP serves as a roadmap with measurable action steps describing what the participant needs to accomplish and how to accomplish it. Along with the work experience gained through their community service assignment, the participant may also take advantage of specific skills training that may include computer classes, practice interview sessions, resume building activities, and job counseling.

Another training option for SCSEP participants is on-the-job experience (OJE), which can be helpful in finding participants unsubsidized employment in the private sector. In OJE, the participant is trained through their employer for a specific position up to 40 hours per week for up to 12 weeks; the employer is given a subsidy for the cost of training. This kind of training gives the participant training and skills specific to a position and guarantees employment with the employer.

## Host Agency

Participants are assigned to a host agency, also known as a community services assignment, after their eligibility for the SCSEP is determined. Host agencies are federal, state, county or city governments or 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in a community close to where the participant lives. Organizations or agencies which can serve as potential worksites include, but are not limited to, libraries, schools, Humane Societies, health care offices, job centers, hospices, housing authorities, medical facilities, parks, and social and human service departments. There are also many host agencies within the Aging Network including Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), independent living centers, State Units on Aging (SUAs), Social Security offices, senior centers, and senior nutrition sites.

Host agencies provide valuable community service assignments in areas such as healthcare, social services, maintenance, janitorial, retail services, clerical/receptionist, customer service, housekeeping, and nutrition services. It is the duty of the host agency to provide the SCSEP participant with valuable training and real-world work skills that will prepare them for unsubsidized employment.

The relationship between the SCSEP participant and their host site is mutually beneficial. The host site benefits from the community service work and talents of the SCSEP participant—whose wages are paid by the subgrantee with SCSEP funds—while the participant receives valuable training and learns real-world work skills during their community service assignment. Through their community service placement, SCSEP participants gain the knowledge and skills necessary to secure unsubsidized employment, which is the ultimate goal of the program.

# FUNDING

## Current and Historic Levels

Funding for SCSEP has shifted dramatically over the past five years. Since FY 2007, federal allocations for SCSEP have been increasing. See **Figure 3** for a history of SCSEP funding since FY 2007. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) gave SCSEP an additional \$119 million above the FY 2009 allotment of \$572 million, to be used to increase access for unemployed older workers during the recession.<sup>11</sup> In FY 2010, the program was given an additional \$225 million—in addition to the requested \$600 million allotment—in special one-time funding, again intended to help more unemployed older workers have access to the program. In 2011, after a long budget battle in Congress, funding for the program decreased to \$450 million. At the date of publication, the FY 2012 allocation for the program had yet to be decided—the President’s FY 2012 Budget Request was \$450 million.

**Figure 3 DOL Funding for SCSEP**



\* Includes \$119 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding

\*\* Include \$225 million in special “one-time” appropriations

## Allocations

At present, 18 National and 56 State/Territorial grantees are funded by the Department of Labor (DOL) to administer the program. The Secretary of Labor reserves 1.5 percent of SCSEP total allocation each year for pilot, demonstration and evaluation projects and .75 percent to be divided between the territories of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Island, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Secretary also reserves funds for grantees who serve eligible American Indian and Pacific Island/Asian American individuals. After the reserve amounts are specified, 22 percent of the remaining SCSEP funds are awarded to the state Governors and trust territories based on a calculation of the number of people in their jurisdiction who are 55 and older and are considered low-income. The remaining 78 percent of funds are awarded to the national grantees on a competitive basis.\*

The OAA requires that 75 percent of all federal SCSEP funds be spent on participant wages and benefits, which subgrantees handle and pay. The OAA caps the amount of money which can be spent on administrative expenses at the state and local levels at 13.5 percent and other program costs, such as training and supportive services, at 11.5 percent.\*\* The State or National grantee divides the administrative funding between itself and its subgrantees, with a higher proportion of the money usually going to the subgrantees.

\* The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) conducts competition for the national grantees every four years.

\*\* In some instances, DOL will allow state and territorial grantees to use up to 15 percent of their money to cover administrative expenses.

## ENDNOTES

1. Pub.L. 88-452, 78 Stat. 508, 42 U.S.C. § 3056.
2. Department of Labor, *FY 2012 Congressional Budget Justification Employment and Training Administration: Community Service Employment for Older Americans*.  
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/budget/2012/PDF/CBJ-2012-V1-06.pdf>
3. Department of Health and Human Services, *Annual Updates of the HHS Poverty Guidelines*, January 20, 2011. <http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/01/20/2011-1237/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines#t-1>
4. Washko, M., Shack, R., Barry, G., & Bennett, P. (2001) Title V of the Older Americans Act, the Senior Community Service Employment Program: Participant Demographics and Service to Racially/Ethnically Diverse Populations. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 23:182-197.
5. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Regional Offices:  
[http://www.doleta.gov/regions/regoffices/Pages/eta\\_default.cfm?CFID=1528034&CFTOKEN=28781577](http://www.doleta.gov/regions/regoffices/Pages/eta_default.cfm?CFID=1528034&CFTOKEN=28781577)
6. 20 C.F.R § 641.400 (b)(1)
7. 20 C.F.R § 641.302
8. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, *Map of State One-Stop Websites*: <http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/onestop/onestopmap.cfm>
9. A list of core services can be found in the WIA Regulations; 20 CFR 662.240
10. Department of Labor, Older Worker Bulletin No. 96-1, *Minimum Assessment Requirements*.  
[http://www.doleta.gov/seniors/html\\_docs/docs/96-1.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/seniors/html_docs/docs/96-1.cfm)
11. P.L. 111-5

# Appendix A

State	AARP Foundation	Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores	Easter Seals, Inc.	Experience Works, Inc.	Goodwill Industries International, Inc.	Institute for Indian Development, Inc.	Mature Services, Inc.	National Able Network	National Asian Pacific Center on Aging	National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.	National Council on the Aging, Inc.	National Indian Council on Aging	National Urban League	Quality Career Services, Inc.	Senior Service America, Inc.	SER – Jobs for Progress National, Inc.	Vermont Associates for	The Workplace, Inc	Total Number of National Grantees in State
Alabama			■												■				2
Alaska																			0
Arizona	■	■			■							■							4
Arkansas	■			■		■				■									4
California	■	■		■					■		■	■			■	■			8
Colorado	■																■		2
Connecticut			■															■	2
Delaware																			0
District of Columbia		■																	2
Florida	■			■						■						■			4
Georgia	■			■							■								3
Hawaii																			0
Idaho				■															1
Illinois	■		■	■					■	■					■	■			7
Indiana	■			■	■										■				4
Iowa	■			■											■				3
Kansas																■			1
Kentucky	■			■							■								3
Louisiana	■	■		■		■					■								5
Maine								■											1
Maryland															■				1
Massachusetts								■	■				■		■				4
Michigan	■			■						■			■						4
Minnesota				■								■		■	■				4
Mississippi				■		■				■					■				4
Missouri	■			■															2
Montana				■															1
Nebraska				■															1
Nevada	■																		1
New Hampshire								■											1
New Jersey			■	■							■		■						4
New Mexico					■							■							2
New York	■		■	■					■		■		■		■				7
North Carolina										■	■				■				3
North Dakota				■															1
Ohio	■			■			■			■			■		■				6
Oklahoma	■			■									■						3
Oregon			■	■															2
Pennsylvania	■	■		■	■				■	■	■		■		■				9
Puerto Rico	■			■															2
Rhode Island																■			1
South Carolina	■			■															2
South Dakota				■								■							2
Tennessee											■				■				2
Texas	■			■					■						■	■			5
Utah			■																1
Vermont																	■		1
Virginia	■			■	■						■								4
Washington	■				■				■										3
West Virginia				■							■								2
Wisconsin				■								■			■	■			4
Wyoming				■															1
American Samoa																			0
Guam																			0
Northern Marianas																			0
Virgin Islands																			0
<b>National Grantees Total Occupied States</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	





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