

Administration for Children and Families

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families - Children's Bureau

National Legal and Judicial Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement
HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0066
Application Due Date: 07/02/2024

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Funding Opportunity Title:
National Legal and Judicial Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement

Announcement Type:
Initial

Funding Opportunity Number:
HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0066

Assistance Listing Number:
93.670,93.652

Due Date for Applications:
07/02/2024

Executive Summary

Notice:

- **Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the entire notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) carefully and observe the application formatting requirements listed in *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*. For more information on applying for an award, please visit "Applying for an ACF Award" at** https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant.

The purpose of this NOFO is to establish a cooperative agreement for a National Legal and Judicial Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement (Center). The Center will serve to build the capacity of the State and Tribal Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) and the broader child welfare legal and judicial communities through a variety of technical assistance (TA). The Center will support improving legal and judicial practice at different stages of child welfare, including prevention, reunification, adoption, permanency, and post-permanency. The Center will build the capacity of TA beneficiaries to meet current and future standards and requirements described in statute and federal regulations (including those specified under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act), improve system performance, and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. The Center will incorporate equity and continuous quality improvement (CQI) approaches throughout these efforts.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority
Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities - Title I, Section 105(b)(5) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106(b)(5))
Adoption Opportunities - Title II, Section 203(b)(4) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978 (42 U.S.C. 5113(b)(4))

Description
BACKGROUND

Scope of Need

Judges, attorneys, and other legal system staff play critical roles in the child welfare system. This includes the engagement of children, youth, and families, as well as the child welfare workforce. The role also includes oversight and advocacy around removal and return decisions; application of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and reasonable and active efforts by the agency; advocacy in case planning and assisting in the resolution of a variety of issues that may be implicated in the child welfare sphere. High-quality legal and judicial practices are necessary to ensure we have an effective and fair child welfare system.

To empower improvements around those key roles, Congress established CIP in the 1990s. The CIP is the Children's Bureau (CB) primary funding dedicated to the legal and judicial community. This program funds states[1]and tribes to assess legal, judicial, and court practices and implement improvements around safety, permanency, well-being, and due process. Currently, all states, Washington D.C.; Puerto Rico; the U.S. Virgin Islands; and eight tribes have CIPs. The CIPs need coordinated support to maximize their potential. There is also a need for TA for the broader child welfare system including for judges, attorneys, and other court staff. This includes attorneys for agencies, children, parents, and kin, including for tribes in tribal courts or ICWA cases. It includes legal team professionals such as social workers or peer mentors on parent or youth attorney teams.

The legal and judicial attention needed also varies across cases in different stages or with different goals such as prevention, reunification, adoption, other permanency goals, and even post-permanency supports. Regarding prevention specifically, though historically many judges and attorneys were not involved in child welfare unless a child was removed, this has been changing over recent years with many jurisdictions being more and more active in secondary prevention. Notably, many states and tribes who are now participating in Independent Legal Representation under Title IV-E[2] included candidates for foster care in their plans. Though placement in foster care is sometimes necessary, much more can be done on the legal and judicial front to ensure it is only done when necessary, and the legal and judicial community has an important role in ensuring this.

Judges and attorneys are the professionals most expressly tasked with ensuring due process in child welfare. Though roles differ from counsel for the agency, parents, children/youth, and judges, they must share in appreciating the gravity of child welfare - a system that dramatically impacts the long-term impact of trauma, the trajectory of people’s lives from permanency to well-being, and important cultural and relational connections. While any area of law can be impactful, focus on due process in this sphere safeguards some of the most important connections in the lives of children and families.

The gravity makes it imperative that families are engaged in the processes because families are the best experts on their unique strengths and needs. Understanding and improving this at a systemic level requires understanding the entire context of what happened; what the professionals did (judges, attorneys, agency); how the child, youth, parent, or relative experienced it; and what is needed in response and support of the child's needs.[3]

In all, the topical and audience scope of the need for legal and judicial roles in child welfare must be focused but not unduly narrow.

Collaboration & Partnerships

With these unique roles in mind, it is important to view the legal community as pieces of a greater puzzle to meet the needs of families in child welfare. State CIPs have requirements around collaboration with the child welfare agency, local courts, and tribes, where applicable. State CIPs are key system partners in supporting the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR).[4] Tribal CIPs likewise must collaborate with the child welfare agency and local courts where applicable.

Beyond those requirements, courts benefit from collaboration and partnership with a wider array of individuals. Some other partners recommended in the CIP Program Instructions include Court Appointed Special Advocates, other CB grants in the state such as the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention lead, key service providers, department of education representatives, ICWA specialists, and parents and youth with lived experience in the child welfare system.[5]

Likewise, technical assistance for courts must also be coordinated with related CB child welfare TA providers such as those supporting state and tribal agencies. Depending on the needs of the state or tribe, the need for collaboration and partnership may need to be broader, for example, including expertise on specific mental health and substance use areas of practice and resources.

With the many moving parts, to support alignment where appropriate, the CB regional offices (ROs) are well situated to understand the more holistic landscape. There is a need, therefore, for regular communication between the Center and the RO staff for the state and tribal courts.

Beyond even the sphere of child welfare, ultimately all child- and family-serving agencies can be an important part of understanding the needs of families and crafting solutions. Trends in CIP work over several years show more investment in holistic approaches. Technical assistance is needed to help CIPs and the legal and judicial community better integrate efforts with the broader child- and family-serving communities.

Equity

For many years in child welfare, efforts to address the safety, permanency, well-being, and due process rights of families have been disconnected from the root causes of systemic oppression. Addressing systemic oppression, bias, and many other inequities must be foundational to truly address the challenges families face in the child welfare system. There is a paramount need for support to those charged with serving families and removing systemic barriers that perpetuate disproportionate minority representation and disparate outcomes for Black, Brown, and Indigenous children and families.

Across the federal government, agencies are assessing how to address systemic racial barriers to meet the needs of people of color. The Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (EO 13985) sets racial equity as a critical priority. The Executive Order states:

"The Federal Government's goal in advancing equity is to provide everyone with the opportunity to reach their full potential. Consistent with these aims, each agency must assess whether, and to what extent, its programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for people of color and other underserved groups."

The Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government (Executive Order 14058) prioritizes including the voices of those with demonstrated experience. The Executive Order states:

"Our government must recommit to being "of the people, by the people, [and] for the people to solve the complex 21st century challenges our Nation faces. The government must be held accountable for designing and delivering services with a focus on the actual experiences of the people whom it is meant to serve. Government must also work to deliver services more equitably and effectively, especially for those who have been historically underserved."

ACF has a "commitment to addressing inequities and advancing equity through assessing and changing policies, programs, and processes across the Department. Additionally, ACF is working to shift the culture, resources, and approaches to institutionalize and sustain a focus on equity over time" (ACF Strategic Plan, 2022). In concert with the agency-wide efforts, the CB has established a new vision that centers our work on serving families with intentional equity. Information about CB's commitment to partnering with relevant groups to examine and improve child welfare and human service systems to yield more equitable outcomes for children and families is included within CB's Equity Statement. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/equity-statement

CB is committed to addressing disproportionality and disparity in child welfare for Black, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), Hispanic and Latino, and other impacted people of color; people who are LGBTQIA2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, Two-Spirit, or other gender or sexual identity); those who experience poverty; and other populations who historically have experienced disproportionality and disparity in the Nation's child welfare systems.

Disproportionality and disparity for children and youth of color is a grave concern in child welfare. Over 50 years of data demonstrate that Black, AI/AN, and Hispanic children are over-represented and have disparate outcomes throughout the child welfare process, including investigations, entry into out-of-home care, and exits from care. It is critical to understand that true meaningful change must begin with the acknowledgment that the child welfare system is functioning as it was designed as it was built on dominant cultural norms and true system transformation will require us to dismantle and challenge policies and practices at all levels.

CB has prioritized halting the adverse effects of disproportionality and disparities on these populations by using a lens of equity and intersectionality. Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how each person's multiple identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality) influence the way an individual experiences the world and is seen by the world. It requires recognizing we are all multifaceted people with multiple identities that affect the discrimination and privilege we experience.

CB has established four priority areas through which it wants to thread equity:

- Preventing children from entering foster care
- Supporting kin caregivers
- Ensuring youth leave care with strengthened relationships, holistic support, and opportunities
- Developing and enhancing the child welfare workforce

Continuous Quality Improvement

Child welfare courts in the United States have made strides in the last decade in investing in qualitative and quantitative data. As seen through annual CIP Self-Assessments and a recent literature review,[6] more jurisdictions are gathering more and more types of data than ever.

However, child welfare courts still lag behind many other fields as far as the regularized orientation to the scientific method. The landscape of these gains is often in the form of pilots, limited areas within states, and not part of routine practice in states and tribes. Effective child welfare legal and judicial strategies are also an understudied area.[7]

As a community, we recently made a big leap in streamlining paths to gathering data with the development of the Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP) in 2022.[8] Interwoven with legal and judicial practice, JCAMP offers guidance and tools that help address due process; family engagement[9]; and experience, equity, collaboration, and the role of lived experience. While JCAMP has already catalyzed increased data collection and use, as a relatively new resource, it still needs continued support.

Innovation & Advancement

With these many needs in mind, there is an overall need for planning for innovation and advancement. In this context, it is important to consider the tiers of potential support for innovation and advancement from national, to state/tribe level, to local area, to individual participants. CIPs serve a state/tribe-level role as grants designed for assessing and implementing improvements. Individual practitioners and the clients they serve are of course the targets we intend as the ultimate actors and beneficiaries of this work. Deliberate structures to make space for innovation and advancement are needed at all levels. A national hub for innovation and advancement is needed to promote innovation and advancement at those levels, to share what we learn, to overall serve as the hub of a layered learning community, and to support innovation itself. While Center staff, given the above roles, are naturally well situated to be a hub of the more resonant and common patterns of need in the child welfare legal field, these overall structures may steer the broader Center work away from truly cutting-edge realms. For example, full-time staff could each have 5 or 10 percent of their time to pursue research or efforts to fill novel or emerging gaps in knowledge, skills, or resources that are in line with the overall purposes of the Center.

Conclusion

Taking all these needs into account, there is a need for a central national provider to build the capacity of individuals and organizations through a variety of TA including:

- Tailored: typically intended to increase the knowledge and skills of individuals and to foster improvements in organizational and system capacity, tailored to the unique needs and conditions within a specific CIP or child welfare legal system. Tailored TA varies in degree of intensity based on the needs of the jurisdiction but should be designed to move a CIP toward achieving its program improvement goals.
- Targeted: typically intended to increase the knowledge and skills of constituents on a topic or in a specific aspect of child welfare practice. A major component of this will be training, coaching, and peer networking activities. Targeted TA may also attempt to foster increased communication between professionals and build relationships and networks that will support learning and expand leadership abilities.
- Universal: typically intended to increase awareness understanding engagement, access, and/or use of a broad audience of professionals and others in the broader child welfare legal community as-a-whole. Universal TA activities include, but are not limited to, the following: reviewing and distilling research, gathering and organizing information and

resources, making information more accessible for broader consumption, developing products and tools, and strategically disseminating information to the general public or target audiences.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Purpose

The overall purpose of the Center is to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families through improvements in child welfare legal and judicial practice.

CIPs are intended to serve as leadership for child welfare legal and judicial matters in their states/tribes. As such, CIPs will be the primary driver of TA offered under this project. This includes that CIPs will be both primary direct recipients of TA but also direct TA to other needed audiences such as attorneys for agencies, children, parents, kin, tribes in ICWA cases, other court and attorney team members, and other wider participants where the need to improve the legal practice is more multidisciplinary.

The scope of this TA includes the full array of prevention to post-permanency supports. Though preventative legal advocacy in child welfare has not been the norm, the breadth and depth of CIP work in this area has increased over recent years. Further, many jurisdictions that have opted into the IV-E independent legal representation option have included candidates[10] for foster care in their coverage. Coupled with the need for innovation and advancement, the topical scope will likely entail areas that are still emerging areas of practice.

Given the critical role of the legal system in ensuring due process, this will be an important lens under the project across different types of TA. While this is in many ways so fundamental to legal practice it sometimes is not even expressly noted.

TA under this project will prioritize due process even in areas outside the audiences of more direct legal and judicial support. For example, a CFSR/JCAMP crosswalk[11] shows how connected due process is to broader child welfare outcomes of interest. The JCAMP guidance also recommends the inclusion of a “multidisciplinary performance measurement committee,” throughout the work.

With the different roles of the various types of attorneys and judges in child welfare, as well as potential peer or other supports, the topic of legal system family engagement is distinct from family engagement with the child welfare agency. However, including lived expertise from parents and youth that has experienced child welfare system and its legal systems is critical to innovation. TA under this project will support family engagement across the legal system roles described above.

For both due process and family engagement, JCAMP provides a road map for how these interrelate with other legal system measures.[12]

Collaborations & Partnerships

Though CIPs are the primary drivers of need and recipients on this project, there are crucial collaborations and partnerships this project will support. Many of these collaborations and partnerships involve diverse educational and work experiences and expertise. This project will support these efforts through deliberate engagement strategies that help ensure thorough, open, and constructive communication despite real or perceived power dynamics.

Collaborations and partnerships that will be supported include:

- CIP efforts with local legal and judicial communities
- State CIP efforts around ICWA and tribal engagement
- Tribal CIP efforts around engaging with states
- Tailored, targeted, and universal product work with other related CB-funded grants, including, but not limited to, those serving state and tribal child welfare agencies
- In addition to the Central Office (CO) role described below, the Center will regularly coordinate with Regional Office Program Specialists (ROPS) assigned to the state or tribe
- As to collaboration and coordination with other CB grants and the ROPS, this project will have a significant role in tailored, targeted, and universal efforts around the CFSR
- This project will also support collaboration with the wider child- and family-serving systems and networks as needs, opportunities, and priorities determine

Equity

This project will provide TA with a deliberate framework that equity considerations should be a part of all topical areas and in the overall approaches noted below such as CQI and evaluation.

Because there is a distinct legal landscape given the ICWA and government-to-government relationships with the federal government and sovereign tribes, special consideration is needed for ICWA and tribal work. The Center will support CIPs as they engage in ICWA work with CIPs engaged in ICWA efforts or other tribal collaboration and State-Tribal Partnerships to Implement Best Practices in Indian Child Welfare[13] grants (ICW Partnerships). It will also support TA to tribes with CIP grants.

With the purpose in mind, the Center will provide the following:

A. Staff Liaisons: Under the preceding cooperative agreement, staff liaisons served several integrated roles, as a liaison for each CIP to support collaboration and partnerships; as general child welfare subject-matter experts able to provide more common types of tailored TA; and as curators of other Center SMEs and resources of the Center more broadly. These liaisons were thus typically attorneys with significant expertise in children's welfare law. Based on prior demand, approximately 500 hours per year are anticipated of tailored direct virtual or in-person contact with TA recipients, with roughly the same number of hours of preparation and follow-up nationally. The TA is anticipated to be mostly virtual given the preferences of TA recipients. The Center will support a liaison model that continues to meet the needs described in *Section I. Program Description, Project Activities, Purpose*.
B. Staff SMEs: Individual SMEs will support the purposes of the Center. These may include individuals with backgrounds in other disciplines consistent with the above. For example, social workers or persons with lived experience who have expertise in family engagement.
C. Evaluation support: The Center will provide education and expertise in the evaluation of child welfare available to support tailored, targeted, and universal TA. This is independent of the evaluation of the Center, as described in *Section I. Program Description, Project Activities, Evaluation*.

D. Targeted Events: The Center will host regular constituency groups and learning experiences. These will be targeted toward CIPs or their designees, regional or local cohorts, or on specific topics relevant to child welfare legal and judicial practice. Some events will be held in conjunction with other listed collaborators and partners. These will generally be conducted under a community of practice approach or similar with substantial input and direction from participants. Based on prior demand and programming, it is estimated that approximately 50 events will be held yearly. It is estimated the average number of participants per event will be approximately 30–40 people. These calls will largely be virtual.
E. The Center should plan to support programmatic aspects of annual in-person regional or national CIP meetings. This should include travel for Center staff, planning, and facilitation, but not general meeting logistics or travel support for others.
F. Integration of Tailored, Targeted, and Universal: The Center should plan for how to leverage the different types of TA. Historically, for example, liaisons, evaluators, and SMEs also served roles in supporting targeted and universal TA to support natural feedback loops from the state/tribe specific to broader trends that inform targeted and universal TA. The Center will employ regular practices to support this integration.
G. Self-Assessment Data to Support Peer Learning: In concert with the activity noted under Innovation & Advancement, the Center will support the publication of annual CIP Self-Assessment data to advance peer connections and learning.
H. Facilitation Support: As support in tailored and targeted TA, the Center will maintain staff and/or develop the capacity of staff to use targeted facilitation techniques in in-person or virtual environments to support thorough, open, and constructive communication. This might include approaches such as human-centered design or liberating structures.
I. Local Court CQI Center will develop a universal product designed to help CIPs develop and manage local CQI efforts.
J. Legal and Judicial Roles in the CFSR: The Center will develop a synthesis providing an overview of successes and challenges in legal and judicial involvement in CFSR Round 4 and recommendations for improvements for the future that can be made to best meet shared broad system goals.
K. Equity Expertise: The Center will have or develop staff with expertise and experience around child welfare legal, judicial practice, and equity.
L. Tribal and ICWA Expertise: The Center will have or develop staff with expertise or experience in tribal child welfare who will serve as SME(s) for TA.
M. Internal Capacity Building on Equity: The Center will implement regular internal processes to support internal capacity building around advancing equity.
N. Internship Program: To support longer-term investment in advancing a diverse legal profession, this project will have a paid internship program for law school students. To leverage consonant curriculum, particular outreach should be made to historically Black colleges and universities, law schools with substantial Indian Law courses, law schools with curricula around the legal needs of recent immigrants, and law schools offering clinical experiences for underserved communities. The important role of persons with lived experience should also be included in outreach and advertisement.
O. Priority Area Universal Products: To support the four equity priority areas listed above, the Center will produce four universal products throughout the project.

P. Civil Legal Representation and Prevention: The Center will develop a universal product on approaches to using broader civil legal representation to prevent unnecessary placements in foster care.
Q. Legal Representation Needs of Kin: The Center will develop a universal product detailing the national needs and strategies for legal representation for kin caregivers for children and youth in foster care.
R. Legal Needs of Older Youth: The Center will develop a universal product on the legal needs of older youth in foster care and strategies for improvement.
S. Legal Workforce: The Center will develop a universal product detailing the needs and recommended approaches to support quality recruitment and retention of attorneys, judges, and other legal system professionals, including peer mentors with lived experience in child welfare law. This will have a particular focus on needs and strategies for a diverse workforce. This will include tribal legal workforce including around ICWA.

Continuous Quality Improvement

After an in-depth examination of scientific method-based approaches to system change was undertaken by the CB and a wide-array of partners, the CQI approach was adopted.

CQI Phases include:

Identifying and Assessing Needs – This phase is the earliest in the process, the team identifies a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if available data is demonstrating that this is a problem, and forming teams to address the issue.

Develop a theory of change—This phase focuses on theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase, you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a "theory of change". The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

Develop/select solution—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

Implementation – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs and developing implementation supports.

Evaluation/assessment – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform the next steps.

CQI will be an overall framework for service delivery to states and tribes in the areas described under the Purpose. CQI will also be applied to the Center and its activities. Modifications of this approach may be made as needed when working with tribal CIPs or on ICWA or tribal collaboration efforts.

Innovation & Advancement

The Center will serve as a national hub for innovation and advancement to support learning across the child welfare legal community at national jurisdictional and local levels. Liaisons, SMEs, and evaluators should be regularly engaged in discussions or through other tasks to leverage their experiences in tailored and targeted work streams to notice emerging patterns of need and strategies.

Considering the CQI and Innovation & Advancement approaches, the Center will:

1. Develop annual profiles of legal and judicial strategies that demonstrate promising strategies and results.
2. Aggregate and use annual quantitative and qualitative CIP Self-Assessment data.
3. Employ regular CQI-based review of TA data and discussions and incorporate targeted internal capacity-building efforts where needs arise for liaisons, SMEs, and evaluators.
4. Develop a simple strategic plan for discussion with CB and support annual updates.
5. Maintain a CIP library that was created under the prior cooperative agreement (CIPShare). This should include identifying new items developed by CIPs that will be useful to add to the library and a plan for staff with expertise in file-run software.
6. Support time for individual staff members to fill novel or emerging gaps in knowledge, skills, or resources that are in line with the overall purposes of the Center but not in areas that have arisen as a broader need

Evaluation

The Center will conduct an ongoing independent evaluation of tailored and targeted TA. The Center must conduct its center-specific evaluation activities throughout the project period to measure process and outcomes. The Center will regularly evaluate its performance including the achievement of project objectives, satisfaction, accessibility, usability, participation, reach, use, increased knowledge, skills, and other outcomes. Center-specific evaluation findings will be used to produce ongoing documentation of project activities and results. The center-specific evaluation must include performance feedback and periodic assessment of program progress to improve its processes and services, as necessary, and serve as a basis for program adjustments. The Center will design and conduct an evaluation that is guided by the project's strategic plan and uses multiple measures, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Center-specific evaluation findings are expected to be substantive, highlighting project strengths, challenges, and outcomes.

With those evaluation needs, the Center will:

A. Evaluation Plan: An overall evaluation plan to document project activities, results, and appropriate data sources. This should include all types of TA provided.
B. TA Tracker: In the first year, develop a tracking system for tailored and targeted TA. This should include quantitative and qualitative data points covering the topics and individuals described in *Section I. Program Description, Project Activities, Purpose, Equity, Collaboration, and Partnerships*. It should enable regular and ad hoc extracts and reporting.

C. Regular CQI Use: The center-specific evaluation information should regularly be shared and discussed with Center staff.
D. Coordination with other Evaluations: The Center will coordinate evaluation activities with other Centers including those designed to support capacity building for state and tribal child welfare agencies. Other Center evaluation plans and approaches will also be developed alongside this grant. Thus, some aspects are unknown. However, the Center should anticipate that there will be regular discussions of the center-specific plans across Centers and that it will attempt to align evaluation approaches where beneficial considering the cost, and regularly share findings to help support overall TA coordination across CB providers.
E. Center Evaluation Staff: The Center should have staff with appropriate expertise to support the evaluation. These staff should have appropriate experience in successfully collecting and managing data, designing appropriate performance measurements, interpreting data, and applying data-derived information to program quality improvement. These staff should be separated in the organizational structure of the Center to support independent evaluation. They should also be separate individuals from the Evaluator(s) providing TA described in *Section I. Program Description, Project Activities, Purpose*.

PROJECT ASSURANCES

The applicant's signature on the application constitutes the recipient's assurance that it will comply with the following requirements:

- Have the project fully functioning within 90 days following notification of the award.
- Electronically submit the final program/evaluation report and any program products to CB within 90 days of the project end date.
- Within 3 months after the award, the project director, child welfare liaison (if different from the Project Director), evaluator, and/or other key staff must attend a 2-day kick-off meeting in Washington, DC.
- The project director, the Child Welfare Agency Liaison (if different from the project director), and the evaluator and/or other key staff must attend the annual grantee meeting, usually held in the spring, in Washington, DC.

SUBAWARDS

Recipients under this program may opt to transfer a portion of substantive programmatic work to other organizations through subaward(s). The prime recipient must maintain a substantive role in the project. ACF defines a substantive role as conducting activities and/or providing services funded under the award that are necessary and integral to the completion of the project. Subrecipient monitoring activities alone, as specified in 45 CFR 75.352, do not constitute a substantive role. Furthermore, ACF does not fund awards where the role of the applicant is primarily to serve as a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute. Subrecipient(s) must meet the eligibility requirements identified in the NOFO, Section III.1. Eligible Applicants. Additionally, all subrecipient(s) must obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number assigned by the System for Award Management (SAM), if they do not already have one. Prime recipients are required to check the SAM to verify that the subrecipient(s) is/are not debarred, suspended, or ineligible. Please reference the Award Term

and Condition on Subawards on the ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements website for further requirements involving subawards.

II. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:
CA (Cooperative Agreement)

Estimated Total Funding:
$3,000,000

Expected Number of Awards:
1

Award Ceiling:
$3,000,000
Per Budget Period

Award Floor:
$2,750,000
Per Budget Period

Average Projected Award Amount:
$3,000,000
Per Budget Period

Anticipated Project Start Date:
09/30/2024

Length of Project Periods:
60-month project period with five 12-month budget periods

Additional Information on Project Periods and Explanation of 'Other'

Additional Information on Awards:
Awards made under this funding opportunity are subject to the availability of federal funds.

Applications requesting an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period, or per project period, as stated in this section, will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. Please see *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors.*

The project award is for a project period of 60 months including the initial award for a 12-month budget period. After a satisfactory initial budget period, the award of continuation for each 12 months will be subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress on the part of the recipient, and a determination that continued funding would be in the Federal Government's best interest.

Funds for this project are authorized separately as indicated here:

There is $7 million authorized under title II, section 203(b)(4) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (42 U.S.C. 5113(b)(4)), Adoption Opportunities. Eligible

activities include, but are not limited to, increasing legal and judicial capacities to ensure timely and meaningful permanency for children and youth in foster care. Such efforts include eliminating barriers to adoption caused by court delays; missing or inadequate judicial determinations; lack of adequate counsel for children, parents, and child welfare agencies; and other legal and judicial challenges or barriers to timely and sustainable permanency for children and families.

There is $1.3 million authorized under title I, section 105(b)(5) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106(b)(5)), Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, ensuring that judges and attorneys have the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children; and providing training and learning opportunities, best practice resources, and research on legal and judicial practice to help meet the needs of children and parents involved with the child welfare system to lessen the likelihood that maltreatment will occur.

Funds must be spent in a manner consistent with their authorized activities. The recipient must separately track the funds and their associated activities and costs for Adoption Opportunities and Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities. The recipient will develop a tracking system that outlines activities and costs by line item and per funding stream. Throughout this project, the recipient must be ready to account for the activities and expenditures attributed to each of these funding portions.

Description of ACF's Anticipated Substantial Involvement Under the Cooperative Agreement Award

CB anticipates that federal agency involvement will produce programmatic benefits to the recipient otherwise unavailable to them for carrying out the project. The involvement and collaboration include:

- CB review and approval of planning stages of the activities before implementation phases may begin;
- CB and recipient collaboration in the performance of key programmatic activities (i.e., strategic planning, implementation, information technology enhancements, training and technical assistance (T/TA), publications or products, and evaluation);
- Close monitoring by CB of the requirements stated in this announcement that limit the recipient's discretion concerning the scope of services offered; and
- Close monitoring by CB during performance which may, to ensure compliance with the intent of this funding, exceed those federal stewardship responsibilities customary for grant activities.
- Consistent with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, (44 U.S.C. 3501-3521) CB will not conduct or sponsor-and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information covered by such Act, unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number.

III. Eligibility Information

III.1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is open to the following: states, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, public agencies, private agencies, or organizations (or combinations of such entities).

Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not eligible and will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors.*

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible to receive awards under this funding opportunity. Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at and, subject to the protections and requirements of 45 CFR Part 87 and 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*, ACF will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, affiliation, or exercise.

Reference to Legal Status
See *Section IV.2. Legal Status of Applicant Entity* for documentation required to support eligibility.

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement:
No
See *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification, Commitment of Non-Federal Resources* for more information.

III.3. Other

Application Disqualification Factors
Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not eligible and will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Award Ceiling Disqualification

Applications that request an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period or per project period, as stated in *Section II. Federal Award Information,* will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. This disqualification applies only to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the first 12-month budget period for projects with multiple budget periods. If the project and budget period are the same, the disqualification applies to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the project period.

Required Electronic Application Submission

ACF requires electronic submission of applications at Grants.gov. **Paper applications received that have not been approved for an exemption from required electronic submission will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.**

If you do not have an internet connection or sufficient capacity to upload large documents to the internet you may contact ACF for an exemption that will allow you to submit your application in paper format. Information and the requirements for requesting an exemption from required electronic application submission are found in "ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Electronic Application Submission."

Missing the Application Deadline (Late Applications)

The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.* Electronic applications submitted to Grants.gov after 11:59 pm ET on the due date, as indicated by a dated and time-stamped email from Grants.gov, will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Applications submitted to Grants.gov which fail their validation check, will not be received at, or acknowledged by ACF. If you submit an application for the same NOFO more than once, only the last on-time submission will be acknowledged.

Paper applications with an approved exemption from the electronic submission requirement must be received by 4:30 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. Paper applications received after 4:30 pm ET on the due date will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Notification of Application Disqualification
Applicants will be notified of a disqualification determination by email or by USPS postal mail within 30 federal business days from the closing date of this NOFO.

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

CB Operations Center
C/O LCG, INC.
ATTN: HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0066
6000 Executive Blvd.
Suite 410
Rockville
MD
20852
888-203-6161
cb@grantreview.org

Application Packages

Electronic Application Submission:

The electronic application submission package is available in the NOFO's listing at Grants.gov.

IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

FORMATTING APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS

Notice of Two-File Requirement

Applicants applying via Grants.gov must upload only two electronic files, excluding Standard Forms (SFs) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-approved forms. Additional files will be removed prior to the merit review.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:

Signature of Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)

Each applicant must designate an authorized organization representative (AOR) with authority to act on the organization's behalf on matters related to the application submission and administration of awards. The AOR signature must appear on all forms in which a signature is required. By signing, the AOR agrees the organization will abide by all applicable Federal statutes, regulations and terms and conditions of the award.

Accepted Font Style and Size

Applications must be in Times New Roman 12-point font, except for footnotes, which may be 10-point font. Pages that contain blurred or illegible text will be removed.

If documents must be scanned, the font size on any scanned documents must be large enough so that it is readable. You may not scan more than one page of a documents onto a single page. Pages with blurred text will be removed from the application.

English Language

Applications must be submitted in the English language and must be in the terms of United States (U.S.) dollars. See 45 CFR §75.111 for more information.

Page Limitations

You must observe the page limitation(s) listed under "PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS" later in this section. **Page limitation(s) do not include SFs and OMB-approved forms.**

All applications must be double-spaced. An application that exceeds the cited page limitation for double-spaced pages will have extra pages removed, and those pages will not be reviewed.

Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements

The following elements of the application submission are exempt from the double-spacing requirements and may be single-spaced:

- Table of Contents
- One-page Project Summary

- Required Assurances and Certifications
- SFs and OMB-approved forms
- Resumes, Logic Models, Proof of Legal Status/Non-Profit Status, Third-Party Agreements, Letters of Support, footnotes and tables
- Line-Item Budget and/or the Budget Justification

Adherence to NOFO Formatting, Font, and Page Limitation Requirements
Applications that fail to adhere to ACF's NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements will be adjusted by the removal of page(s) from the application. Pages will be removed before the merit review and will not be made available to reviewers.

NOTE: Applicants failing to adhere to ACF's NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements will receive a letter from ACF notifying them that their application was amended. The letter will be sent after awards have been issued and will specify the reason(s) for removal of page(s).

Corrections/Updates to Submitted Applications
When applicants revise a previously submitted application, ACF will accept only the last on-time application for pre-review under the Application Disqualification Factors. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors* and *Section IV.2. Application Submission Options.*

Copies Required
Applicants must submit one complete copy of the application package electronically. Applicants must follow the registration and application submission instructions provided at Grants.gov.

Accepted Application Format
With the exception of the required SFs and OMB-approved forms, all application materials must be formatted so that they are 8 ½" x 11" white paper with 1-inch margins all around.

If possible, applicants are encouraged to include page numbers for each page within the application.

PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:

Except Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-approved forms, the application submission is **limited to 75 pages** in its entirety. The two files applicants must submit are:

The Project Description file must include these items in this order:

1. Table of Contents
2. Project Summary
3. Objectives and Need for Assistance
4. Approach
5. Project Timeline and Milestones
6. Organizational Capacity

7. Evaluation
8. Line-Item Budget and Budget Justification

The Appendices file must include items in this order:

1. Proof of Legal Status (if applicable)
2. Third-party agreements
3. Staff and Position Data (e.g., resumes, job descriptions, organizational charts)
4. Indirect Cost Rate Letter (if applicable)

ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
You are required to submit applications electronically unless you have received an exemption that will allow submission in paper format. See *Section IV.2. Application Submission Options* for information about requesting an exemption**.**

Electronic applications will only be accepted via Grants.gov. **ACF will not accept applications submitted via email or via facsimile.**

Each applicant is required to upload ONLY two electronic files, excluding SFs and OMB-approved forms.

File One: Must contain the entire Project Description, and the Budget and Budget Justification (including a line-item budget and a budget narrative).

File Two: Must contain all documents required in the Appendices.

Formatting Submission Files
ACF strongly recommends that File One and File Two be uploaded as Portable Document Files (PDFs).

To adhere to the two-file requirement, you may need to convert and/or merge documents together using a PDF converter software. Applicants using Adobe Acrobat Reader software will be able to merge these documents together. ACF recommends merging documents electronically rather than scanning multiple documents into one document manually.

Applicants must ensure that the version of Adobe Acrobat Reader they are using is compatible with Grants.gov. To verify Adobe software compatibility please go to Grants.gov and click on “Applicants” at the top bar menu and select “Adobe Software Compatibility."

Naming Application Submission Files
Carefully observe the file naming conventions required by Grants.gov. Limit file names to 50 characters (characters and spaces).Please also see https://www.grants.gov/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters.

Use only file formats supported by ACF
While ACF supports all of the following file formats, **we strongly recommend that the two files (Project Description and Appendices) are uploaded as PDFs in order to comply with**

the two-file upload limitation.

ACF supports the following file formats:

- Adobe PDF – Portable Document Format (.pdf)
- Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx)
- Microsoft Excel (.xls or .xlsx)
- Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt)
- Image Formats (.JPG, .GIF, .TIFF, or .BMP only)

Documents in file formats not listed here will be removed from the application and will not be used in the merit review. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make awards based on an incomplete application.

Do Not Encrypt or Password-Protect the Electronic Application Files
If ACF cannot access submitted electronic files because they are encrypted or password protected, the affected file will not be reviewed. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make awards based on an incomplete application.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PAPER APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS:
You must receive an exemption in order for a paper application to be accepted for review. For more information on the exemption, see "ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission."

Applicants with an approved exemption for paper application submission should download the forms package associated with the NOFO's Synopsis on Grants.gov under the Package tab.

All copies of mailed paper applications must be submitted in a single package. If an applicant is submitting multiple applications under a single NOFO, or multiple applications under separate NOFOs, each submission must be packaged separately. The package(s) must be clearly labeled with the NOFO title and Funding Opportunity Number.

Applicants must submit one original and two copies of the complete application, including all SFs and OMB-approved forms. The original copy must have original signatures. Copies of the application, not the original, will be reproduced by the federal government for review. **All application materials must be one-sided for duplication purposes. All pages in the application submission must be sequentially numbered.**

Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

Applicants seeking an award under this funding opportunity must submit the listed SFs, assurances, and certifications with the application. All required SFs, assurances, and certifications are available in the Application Package posted for this NOFO at Grants.gov.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Certification	Applicants self-certify their maintenance of effort. The MOE should be on the applicant organization's letterhead. Submission is required for all applicants under this NOFO. See *Section IV.2. Formatting Application Submissions* for instructions on its placement in the application submission.	Required for all applications.
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Required of all applicants. Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and project award period. Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: http://www.sam.gov.	See *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* for more information.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Submission required of all applicants with the application package. If it is not submitted with the application package, it must be submitted prior to award.	Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non- Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs	Submission is required for all applicants when applying for a non-construction project. SFs must be used. Forms must be submitted by the application due date. By signing and submitting the SF-424B, applicants are making the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination.	Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project.
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it	If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	may also be submitted prior to award.	of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and submit the SF-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

Additional Required Assurances and Certifications

Mandatory Grant Disclosures

All applicants and recipients are required to submit, in writing, to ACF and the HHS Office of the Inspector General, all information related to violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. (Mandatory Disclosures, 45 CFR § 75.113)

Disclosures must be sent in writing to:

> The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Grants Management, ATTN: Grants Management Specialist, 330 C Street, SW., Switzer Building, Corridor 3200, Washington, DC 20201
>
> **And to:**
>
> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, ATTN: Mandatory Grant Disclosures, Intake Coordinator, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Cohen Building, Room 5527, Washington, DC 20201
>
> **Fax:** (202) 205-0604 (Include “Mandatory Grant Disclosures” in subject line) or
> **Email:** grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov

Proprietary Information and Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

ACF will be using non-federal reviewers in the review process. You have the option of omitting from the application copies (not the original) specific salary rates or amounts for individuals specified in the application budget as well as Social Security Numbers, if otherwise required for individuals. The copies may include summary salary information. If applications are submitted electronically, ACF will omit the same specific salary rate information from copies made for use during the review process.

The Project Description

The Project Description Overview

General Expectations and Instructions
The Project Description requests the information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for financial assistance. It must address all activities for which federal funds are being requested and all application requirements as stated in this section. The Project Description must explain how the project will meet the purpose of the NOFO, as described in *Section I. Program Description*. As a reminder, reviewers will be evaluating this section in accordance with *Section V.1. Criteria*.

The Project Description must be clear, concise, and complete. ACF is particularly interested in Project Descriptions that convey strategies for achieving intended performance. Project Descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance and measurable outcomes, not length.

Cross-referencing should be used rather than repetition. Supporting documents designated as required must be included in the Appendix of the application.

Letter of Intent
Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify ACF of their intention to submit an application under this NOFO. **The letter of intent is optional. Failure to submit a letter of intent will not impact eligibility to submit an application and will not disqualify an applicant from the merit review.** Letter of intent information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications.

Please submit a letter of intent by the deadline date listed in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. The letter of intent should include the following information: number and title of this funding opportunity; the name and address of the applicant organization; and the name, phone number, fax number and email address of a contact person.

Please submit to:

CB Operations Center

C/O LCG, INC.

ATTN: HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0066 LETTER OF INTENT

6000 Executive Blvd.

Suite 410

Rockville, MD 20852

cb@grantreview.org

Table of Contents
List the contents of the application including corresponding page numbers. The table of contents may be single spaced.

Project Summary
Provide a summary of the project description. The summary must include a brief description of

the applicant's proposed project including the needs to be addressed, the proposed activities or services, and if applicable, the population group(s) to be served. The summary must be clear, accurate, concise, and without cross-references to other parts of the application. Please place the following at the top of the Project Summary:

- Project Title
- Applicant Name
- Address
- Contact Phone Numbers (Voice, Fax, Cell)
- Email Address
- Website Address, if applicable

The Project Summary must be single-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, and limited to one page in length. Additional pages will be removed and will not be reviewed.

Geographic Location
Describe the precise physical location of the project and boundaries of the area to be served by the proposed project. If the geographic area(s) are served by both the primary recipient and subrecipient organization(s), describe the locations covered by all organizations anticipated to receive funding from the award.

Legal Status of Applicant Entity
Applicants must provide the following documentation:

Non-Profit Organizations

Proof of Non-Profit Status Options:

Option 1: 501(c)(3) and non-501(c)(3) non-profit organizations are eligible
Non-profit organizations applying for funding are required to submit proof of their non-profit status. Proof of non-profit status is any one of the following:

- A reference to the applicant organization's listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code.
- A copy of a currently valid IRS tax-exemption certificate.
- A statement from a state taxing body, state attorney general, or other appropriate state official certifying that the applicant organization has non-profit status and that none of the net earnings accrue to any private shareholders or individuals.
- A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status.
- Any of the items in the subparagraphs immediately above for a state or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

Unless directed otherwise, applicants must include proof of non-profit status in the *Appendices* file of the application submission.

Need for Assistance
Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s)

requiring a solution. The need for assistance, including the nature and scope of the problem, must be demonstrated. Supporting documentation, such as letters of support and testimonials from concerned parties, may be included in the Appendix. Any relevant data based on planning studies or needs assessments should be included or referred to in the endnotes or footnotes. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as available.

Objectives
Clearly state the principal and if applicable, subordinate objectives of the project. Applicants must address how the objectives stated relate to the overall purpose of the program and describe how objectives will be achieved.

With the Need for Assistance and Objectives in mind, the applicant will describe how it will:

A. Ensure it has a quality plan for Staff Liaisons to support CIPs.
B. Ensure it has SMEs that have targeted expertise to support the Purpose in delivering TA.
C. Ensure it has staff with education and expertise in evaluation in child welfare available to support tailored, targeted, and universal TA.
D. Support regular constituency groups and learning experiences targeted toward the topics and audiences including for CIPs or their designees, regional or local cohorts, or on specific topics relevant to child welfare legal and judicial practice. The plan should detail how the applicant would support these events and obtain input from participants.
E. Support programmatic aspects of annual in-person regional or national CIP meetings.
F. Support the integration of tailored, targeted, and universal TA.
G. Advance peer connections and learning by publishing selected annual CIP Self-Assessment data.
H. Support quality facilitation of groups in tailored and targeted TA to support thorough, open, and constructive communication.
I. Develop a Local Court CQI universal product designed to help CIPs develop and manage local CQI efforts.
J. Develop a synthesis on legal and judicial involvement in the CFSR in year 4. This should include an overview of successes and challenges and recommendations for improvements for the future that can be made to best meet shared broad system goals.
K. Ensure it has staff or consultants with expertise in equity.
L. Provide for staff or consultants with expertise in tribal child welfare and the ICWA to support the team as SME(s) for TA.
M. Implement regular internal processes to support internal capacity building around advancing equity.
N. Support a paid internship program for law school students. The plan should describe how outreach will be made to law schools with curricula relevant to equity and how the interns will be managed by the team.
O. Develop four universal products. These will include universal products on:
    1. Using broader civil legal representation to prevent unnecessary placements in foster care.
    2. The national needs and strategies for legal representation for kin caregivers for children and youth in foster care
    3. The legal needs of older youth in foster care and strategies for improvement.

4. The needs and recommended approaches to support quality and equitable recruitment and retention of attorneys, judges, and other legal system professionals.

Approach
Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed project will be accomplished. Applicants must account for all functions or activities identified in the application.

Cite potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing project goals and explain strategies that will be used to address these challenges.

In the Approach, applicants should address the CQI approach overall and how it will implement the following broad CQI efforts:

A. Promising Practice Profiles: Each year, in consultation with CB, work with selected CIPs to develop succinct profiles describing promising strategies and results.
B. Annual Self-Assessment Data: Annually, conduct a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data from CIP self-assessments.
C. Internal Capacity Building: Employ regular CQI-based review of TA data and discussions and incorporate targeted internal capacity-building efforts where needs arise for liaisons, SMEs, and evaluators.
D. Strategic Plan: In the first quarter, develop a simple strategic plan for discussion with CB. At the end of each year, a more thorough update will be completed.

Also, in the Approach, the applicant should address how it will structure itself to support innovation and advancement and how the Center will specifically address:

E. CIP Resource Library: Maintain a CIP library that was created under the prior cooperative agreement (CIPShare). This will include identifying new items developed by CIPs that will be useful to add to the library. This library runs in Filerun https://www.filerun.com.
F. Individual Innovation Time: Allow time and space for more individualized staff innovation. The applicant should consider how this will be tracked and evaluated.

Project Timeline and Milestones
Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections (for the entire project period) of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity, in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. Data may be organized and presented as project tasks and subtasks with their corresponding timelines during the project period. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

Organizational Capacity
Provide the following information on the applicant organization and, if applicable, on any cooperating partners:

- Organizational charts.
- Resumes.
- Curricula Vitae (CV).

- Biographical Sketches (short narrative description).
- Copy or description of the applicant organization's fiscal control and accountability procedures.
- Evidence that the applicant organization, and any partnering organizations, have relevant experience and expertise with administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of programs similar to that offered under this funding opportunity.
- Evidence that each participating organization, including partners, contractors and/or subrecipients, possess the organizational capability to fulfill their role(s) and function(s) effectively.
- Job descriptions for each vacant key position.

If known at the time of application submission, the applicant must disclose their intent to enter into subaward arrangements in their application. For each proposed subaward, the applicant must include a description of the work to be performed by the subrecipient(s).

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities
Recipients are required to ensure proper oversight in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D.

These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

- Financial and Program Management
- Property Management
- Procurement
- Performance and Financial Monitoring and Reporting
- Subrecipient Monitoring and Management
- Record Retention and Access
- Remedies for Noncompliance
- Prior Written Approval

Describe the framework (e.g., governance, policies and procedures, risk management, systems) in place to ensure proper oversight of federal funds and activities in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D. The description must include: system(s) for record-keeping and financial management; procedures to identify and mitigate risks and issues (e.g., audit findings, continuous program performance assessment findings, program monitoring); and those key staff that will be responsible for maintaining oversight of program activities staff, and, if applicable, partner(s) and/or subrecipient(s).

Program Performance Evaluation Plan
Applicants must describe a plan for the program performance evaluation that will contribute to continuous quality improvement. The program performance evaluation must monitor ongoing activities and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project. Include descriptions of the inputs (e.g., organizational profile, collaborative partners, key staff, budget, service processes and other resources), key activities, and expected outcomes of the funded activities. The plan must explain how the inputs, activities, and outcomes will be measured; how the information will be used to inform improvement of funded activities; and any processes that support data quality.

Applicants must describe the organizational systems and processes that will effectively track performance outcomes, including a description of how the organization will collect and manage data (e.g., assign skilled staff, data management software, data integrity, etc.) in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes. Applicants must describe any potential obstacles for implementing the program performance evaluation and how those obstacles will be addressed. Applicants must include a timeline for how information from the quality improvement evaluation will be reviewed and applied to the ongoing project.

In the Program Performance Evaluation Plan section, the applicant should provide plans for the following:

A. Developing an overall Center evaluation plan. This should focus more on plan development, as some key aspects are necessarily 'to be determined' by items under the other sections.
B. Developing a tracking system for tailored and targeted TA. This should include quantitative and qualitative data points and be framed around CQI.
C. Regularly share data with Center staff to support internal CQI.
D. Coordinating evaluation activities with other CB-funded TA partners including those designed to support capacity building for state and tribal child welfare agencies. This should focus on a general approach to coordination as many pieces of this are still to be determined across other TA providers.

Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
Provide a description of how protected PII and other information that is considered sensitive, consistent with applicable federal, state, local and tribal laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, will be collected and safeguarded. The applicant must provide the methods and/or systems that will be used to ensure that confidential and/or sensitive information is properly handled and if applicable, address the process for subrecipient(s) and/or contractors. Also, provide a plan for the disposition of such information at the end of the project period. See 45 CFR § 75.303(e) for more information.

Dissemination Plan
Applicants must propose a plan to disseminate reports, products, and/or project outputs so that information is provided to key target audiences. Dissemination plans must include:

- Dissemination goals and objectives;
- Strategies to identify and engage with target audiences;
- Allocation of sufficient staff time and budget for dissemination purposes;
- A preliminary plan to evaluate the extent to which target audiences have received project information and have used it as intended, and
- The timeline for dissemination.

Third-Party Agreements

Third-party agreements include Letters of Commitment, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Memoranda of Agreement (MOA). Letters of Commitment, MOUs and MOAs must clearly describe the roles and responsibilities for project activities and the support and/or resources that the third-party (i.e., subrecipient, contractor, or other cooperating entity) is committing. Letters

of Commitment, MOUs, and MOAs must be signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make such commitments on behalf of their organization. General letters of support are **not** considered third-party agreements.

Applicants must provide Letters of Commitment, MOUs, or MOAs between recipients and third-parties (i.e., subrecipients, contractors, or other cooperating entities).

Collaboration/consortia applicants must provide Letters of Commitment, MOUs, or MOAs identifying the primary applicant and all collaborators that are responsible for project activities.

Letters of Support
Provide statements from community, public, and/or commercial leaders that support the project proposed for funding. All submissions must be included in the application package. At minimum, each letter of support must identify the individual writing the letter, the organization they represent, the date, and reason(s) for supporting the project.

The Project Budget and Budget Justification

All applicants are required to submit a project budget and budget justification with their application. The project budget is entered on the Budget Information SF, either SF- 424A or SF-424C. Applicants are encouraged to review the form instructions in addition to the guidance in this section. The project budget consists of a budget narrative and a line-item budget detail that includes detailed calculations for "object class categories" identified on the Budget Information SF. Applicants must indicate the method they are selecting for their indirect cost rate. See Indirect Charges for further information.

Project budget calculations must include estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated. If cost sharing or matching is a requirement, applicants must include a detailed listing of any funding sources identified in Block 18 of the SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance). See the table in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* listing the appropriate budget forms to use in this application.

Special Note: *Annual appropriations legislation for the Department of Health and Human Services limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this funding opportunity may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. For the Executive Level II salary, please see "Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables" under https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/. The salary limitation reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits, indirect costs and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.*

Provide a budget using the SF-424A and/or SF-424C, as applicable, for each year of the proposed project.

Provide a budget justification, which includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail, for each year of the proposed project. The budget narrative should describe how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of the proposed costs.

The award made under this notice of funding opportunity is made up of two funding sources; therefore, applicants must provide additional detail in their budget and budget justifications that proportionately reflects the percentages and types of cost and activities by funding source. A description of the multiple funding sources is shown in *Section II. Federal Award Information, Additional Information on Awards.*

In the SF-424A, applicants must show the amounts estimated under each Object Class Category, by funding source under each of the columns.

Section A- Budget Summary:

Column (a) Grant Program, Function, or Activity:

List the program associated with the funding source, e.g., 1. Adoption Opportunities 2. Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities.

Column (b) Identify the Assistance Listing Number

Section B - Budget Categories:

Object Class Categories: Use multiple columns to provide cost details for each Object Class Category by funding source.

The following are the funding amounts by funding source and the percentages of budget they represent under the grant award:

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (42 U.S.C. 5113(b)(4)), Adoption Opportunities. = 1,700,000 (56.67 percent)

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106(b)(5)), Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities. = 1,300,000 (43.33 percent)

Funds must be spent in a manner consistent with their authorized activities. The successful applicant must separately track the funds and their associated activities and costs for Adoption Opportunities and Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities. The recipient will develop a tracking system that outlines activities and costs by line item and per funding stream. Throughout this project, the recipient must be ready to account for the activities and expenditures attributed to each of these funding portions.

Recipients should provide for a kickoff meeting and annual face-to-face meetings in Washington, D.C. for a minimum of five staff members, including the project director, evaluator, and leadership from each of the major Center project strategies.

For applicants proposing to use subaward(s), if the total amount budgeted for subawards exceeds 50 percent of total direct costs for the budget period, the applicant must provide a justification for subawarding the portion of the project and must explain how the prime recipient plans to maintain a substantive role in the project. Applicants must explain why the participation of the subrecipient is necessary, and why the applicant cannot achieve the objectives without the subrecipient(s)' participation.

General

Use the following guidelines for preparing the project budget and budget justification. The budget justification includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail. Applications should only include allowable costs in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

Personnel

Description: Costs of employee salaries and wages. See 45 CFR § 75.430 for more information on allowable personnel costs. Do not include the personnel costs of consultants, contractors and subrecipients under this category.

Justification: For each position, provide: the name of the individual (if known), their title; time commitment to the project in months; time commitment to the project as a percentage or full-time equivalent; annual salary; project salary; wage rates; etc. Identify the project director or principal investigator, if known at the time of application.

Fringe Benefits

Description: Costs of employee fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees in addition to regular salaries and wages. For more information on Fringe Benefits please refer to 45 CFR § 75.431. **Do not include** the fringe benefits of consultants, contractors, and subrecipients because those costs should be listed under the "Contractual" category as part of the total value of the contract or agreement.

Typically, fringe benefit amounts are determined by applying a calculated rate for a particular class of employee (full-time or part-time) to the salary and wages requested. Fringe rates are often specified in the approved indirect cost rate agreement. Fringe benefits may be treated as a direct cost or indirect cost in accordance with the applicant's accounting practices. Only fringe benefits as a direct cost should be entered under this category.

Justification: Provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, Federal Insurance Contributions Act taxes, retirement, taxes, etc.

Travel

Description: Costs of project-related travel (i.e., transportation, lodging, subsistence) by employees of the applicant organization who are in travel status on official business. Travel by non-employees such as consultants, contractors or subrecipients should be included under the Contractual line item. Local travel for employees in non-travel status should be listed on the Other line. Travel costs should be developed in accordance with the applicant's travel policies and 45 CFR § 75.474.

Justification: For each trip show: the total number of travelers; travel destination; duration of trip; per diem; mileage allowances, if privately owned vehicles will be used to travel out of town; and other transportation costs and subsistence allowances. If appropriate for this project, travel costs for key project staff to attend ACF-sponsored workshops/conferences/recipient orientations should be detailed in the budget justification.

Equipment

Description: "Equipment" means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds the lesser of: (a) the capitalization level established by the organization for the financial statement purposes, or (b) $5,000. (Note: Acquisition cost means the net invoice unit price of an item of equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as taxes, duty, protective in-transit insurance, freight, and installation, shall be included in, or excluded from, acquisition cost in accordance with the organization's regular written accounting practices.) See 45 CFR § 75.439 for more information.

Justification: For each type of equipment requested provide: a description of the equipment; the cost per unit; the number of units; the total cost; and a plan for use on the project; as well as use and/or disposition of the equipment after the project ends.

Supplies

Description: Tangible personal property other than those included under the Equipment category. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of $5,000, or the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, regardless of the length of its useful life. See 45 CFR § 75.2, 75.321, and 75.453 for more information.

Justification: Specify general categories of supplies and their costs. Show computations and provide other information that supports the amount requested.

Contractual

Description: Cost of all contracts and subawards except those that should be placed under other categories such as equipment, supplies, construction, etc. Include third-party evaluation contracts, procurement contracts, and subawards. Recipients are required to use 45 CFR §§ 75.326-.340 procurement procedures, and subawards are subject to the requirements at 45 CFR §§ 75.351-.353. Costs related to professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill, and who are not officers or employees, must be listed in the Other category. (Typically, these arrangements will take the form of a consultant agreement directly with an individual as opposed to a contract with a company that employs the consultant. The latter case must still be listed under Contractual line item.)

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, include cost of third-party renting or leasing agreements for equipment; and third-party renting or leasing agreements for real property by address for each building, facility, administrative office, space, structure, land, and other real property.

Justification: Indicate whether the proposed agreement qualifies as a subaward or contract in accordance with 45 CFR § 75.351. Provide the name of the contractor/subrecipient (if known), a description of anticipated services, a justification for why they are necessary, a breakdown of estimated costs, and an explanation of the selection process. In addition, for subawards, the applicant must provide a detailed budget and budget narrative for each subaward, by entity name,

along with the same justifications referred to in these budget and budget justification instructions.

For contracts, demonstrate that procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open, and free competition. Applicants must justify any anticipated procurement action that is expected to be awarded without competition and exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold stated in 48 CFR § 2.101(b). Recipients may be required to make pre-award review and procurement documents, such as requests for proposals or invitations for bids, independent cost estimates, etc., available to ACF.

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, for each real property proposed or claimed for rent or lease include: the rent amount with calculation; terms of lease; maintenance and repair amounts with details on each type of expense proposed and its associated cost; minor A&R with specifics for each type of proposed expense and its associated cost; show the computation and provide other information that supports the amount requested. Only when allowable and with prior approval, describe the financing costs (including interest) including terms for the real property address. For applicable ACF programs with real property authority, see ACF Property Guidance. **Do not include** real property owned by the recipient or arrangements considered "less-than-arms-length," "sale and lease back," "finance lease" per Financial Accounting Standards Board, "financed purchase" per Government Accounting Standards Board standards because these costs (e.g., depreciation costs) if charged as 1) a direct cost, should be listed under the "Other" category or 2) an indirect cost as with any indirect costs, as part of their indirect cost pool that is used to calculate an indirect cost rate). These costs must be treated as either direct or indirect costs, not both. For more information, see 45 CFR §75.2, 75.414, 75.430-75.431, 75.434, 75.436, 75.439, and 75.452.

Other

Description: Enter the total of all other costs. Such costs, where applicable and appropriate, may include, but are not limited to: individual consultant costs; local travel; insurance (when not included under the Fringe category); food (when allowable); medical and dental costs (non-personnel); professional service costs (e.g., audit charges); depreciation of real property and equipment (when not treated as an indirect cost), printing and publications, training costs (such as tuition and stipends), staff development costs, and administrative costs (when not treated as an indirect cost). Please note costs must be allowable per 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

Justification: Provide a breakdown of costs, computations, a narrative description, and a justification for each cost under this category.

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, include depreciation by real property address for each building, facility, administrative office, structure, land, and other real property proposed for use and depreciation of equipment proposed for use. For each real property owned by the recipient or less-than-arms-length lease intended to be proposed or claimed for use provide, if applicable, and in accordance with 45 CFR §§75.436 and 75.465: the allocable percentage and total dollar amount; the depreciation amount with type of method and calculation used; tax amount; insurance amount and what it covers; maintenance and repair amounts with details on each type of expense proposed and its associated cost; minor A&R with specifics for each type of proposed expense and its associated cost; the ownership type (e.g., owned, leased, or intent to lease); show the computation and provide other information that supports the amount requested.

For more information, please see ACF Property Guidance. **Do not include** costs of third-party renting or leasing real property and equipment because those costs should be under the "Contractual" category.

Indirect Charges

Description: Indirect or Facilities & Administration (F&A) (F&A means those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. F&A costs are generally used by institutions of higher education). Typical examples of indirect or F&A costs include but are not limited to depreciation on buildings and equipment, equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, and general administration and expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of personnel administration and accounting. For more information, see 45 CFR §75.2, 75.414, 75.430-75.431, 75.434, 75.436, and 75.439. Enter the total amount of indirect costs. This category has one of two methods that an applicant can select. An applicant may only select one.

1. The applicant currently has an indirect cost rate approved by HHS or another cognizant federal agency.

   Justification: An applicant must enclose a copy of the current approved rate agreement. If the applicant is requesting a rate that is less than what is allowed under the program, the authorized representative of the applicant organization must submit a signed acknowledgement that the applicant is accepting a lower rate than allowed. Choosing to charge a lower rate will not be considered during the merit review or award selection process.

2. Per 45 CFR § 75.414(f) Indirect (F&A) costs, "any non-Federal entity [i.e., applicant] that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, ... may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. As described in Section 75.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as the non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time."

   Justification: This method only applies to applicants that have never received an approved negotiated indirect cost rate from HHS or another cognizant federal agency. Applicants awaiting approval of their indirect cost proposal may request the 10 percent *de minimis* rate. When the applicant chooses this method, costs included in the indirect cost pool must not be charged as direct costs to the award.

Commitment of Non-Federal Resources

Description: Amounts of non-federal resources that will be used to support the project as identified in Block 18 of the SF-424. This line should be used to indicate required and/or voluntary committed cost sharing or matching, if applicable.

For all federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria listed in 45 CFR § 75.306. For awards that require matching by statute, recipients must meet the required level of cost sharing. Recipients that have voluntarily decided to contribute cost sharing when it is not required, or at a higher level than required, will be held accountable for the proposed cost-sharing, if accepted by ACF and included in the Notice of Award (NoA). **A recipient's failure to provide cost sharing that has been accepted by ACF may result in the disallowance of federal funds.**

Justification: If an applicant is relying on cost share or match from a third-party, then a firm commitment of these resources (letter(s) or other documentation) is required to be submitted with the application. Detailed budget information must be provided for every funding source identified in Item 18. "Estimated Funding ($)" on the SF-424.

Applicants are required to fully identify and document in their applications the specific costs or contributions they propose in order to meet a matching requirement. Applicants are also required to provide documentation in their applications on the sources of funding or contribution(s). In-kind contributions must be accompanied by a justification of how the stated valuation was determined. Matching or cost sharing must be documented by budget period (or by project period for fully funded awards).

Applications that lack the required supporting documentation will not be disqualified from the merit review; however, it may impact an application's scoring under the evaluation criteria in *Section V.1. Criteria* of this funding opportunity.

Paperwork Reduction Act Disclaimer

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, the public reporting burden for the Project Description is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. The Project Description information collection is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires 03/31/2026. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Application Submission Options

Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

Electronic Delivery

ACF applicants are required to submit their applications online through Grants.gov.

How to Register through Grants.gov

Applicants should read the registration instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process.

Organizations must have an active System for Award (SAM) registration which provides a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and Grants.gov account to apply for awards under funding opportunities.

Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but SAM registration may take several weeks. Therefore, an organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entities ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

***Register with SAM*:** All organizations (entities) applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

***Create a Grants.gov Account*:** The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Follow the on-screen instructions provided on the registration page.

***Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account*:** For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles: After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is then expected to log into Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov.

For questions related to this funding opportunity, please contact the number listed in the application package.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to call the Grants.gov Support Center and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist ACF with tracking and understanding background information on the issue.

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 pm ET on the due date established for each program. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will receive an acknowledgment of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ACF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submission, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role.

Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by ACF.

Issues with Federal Systems

For any systems issues experienced with Grants.gov or SAM.gov, please refer to ACF's "Policy for Applicants Experiencing Federal Systems Issues" for complete guidance.

Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission

To request an exemption from required electronic submission, please refer to ACF's "Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission" for complete guidance.

Paper Application Submission

See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* of this funding opportunity for address information for paper application submissions.

IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants must have a UEI and an active registration with SAM (https://www.sam.gov) prior to applying to a funding opportunity.

HHS requires all entities that plan to apply for, and ultimately receive, federal funds from any HHS Agency to:

- Be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application or plan;
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information until the process is complete. If you receive an award, your SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award. It must be renewed every 365 days to keep it active;
- Provide its UEI in each application or plan it submits; and
- Ensure any proposed subrecipient(s) have obtained and provided to the recipient their UEI(s) prior to making any subawards (**Note:** Subrecipients are not required to complete full SAM registration.).

ACF is prohibited from making an award until an applicant has complied with these requirements. At the time an award is ready to be made, if the intended recipient has not complied with these requirements, ACF:

- May determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award; and
- May use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

IV.4. Submission Dates and Times

Due Date for Letter of Intent

Number of Days from Publication 30

06/02/2024
Number of Days from Publication 60

Due Date for Applications
07/02/2024

Explanation of Due Dates

The due date for receipt of applications is listed in the *Overview* and in this section.

Electronic Applications
The deadline for submission of electronic applications via Grants.gov is 11:59 pm ET on the due date.

Applications submitted to Grants.gov at any time during the open application period prior to the due date and time that fail the Grants.gov validation check will not be received at ACF. These applications will not be acknowledged.

Mailed Paper Applications
The deadline for receipt of mailed paper applications is 4:30 pm ET on the due date listed in the Overview and in this section. Applications should be mailed to the address provided in *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements.*

No appeals will be considered for applications classified as late under the following circumstances:

- Applications submitted electronically via Grants.gov are considered late when they are dated and time-stamped after the deadline of 11:59 pm ET on the due date.
- Paper applications received by mail after 4:30 pm ET on the due date will be classified as late and will be disqualified.
- Paper applications received from applicant organizations that were not approved for an exemption from required electronic application submission under the process described in *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Submission* will be disqualified.

Emergency Extensions
ACF may extend an application due date when circumstances make it impossible for an applicant to submit their applications on time. Only events such as documented natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, tornados, etc.), or a verifiable widespread disruption of electrical service, or mail service, will be considered. The determination to extend or waive the due date, and/or receipt time, requirements in an emergency situation rests with the Grants Management Officer listed as the Office of Grants Management Contact in *Section VII. HHS Awarding Agency Contact(s).*

Acknowledgement of Received Application

Acknowledgement from Grants.gov

Applicants will receive an initial email upon submission of their application to Grants.gov. This email will provide a **Grants.gov Tracking Number**. Refer to this tracking number in all communication with Grants.gov. The email will also provide a **date and time stamp**, which serves as the official record of the application's submission**.** Receipt of this email does not indicate that the application is accepted or that it has passed the validation check.

Applicants will also receive an email acknowledging that the received application is in the **Grants.gov validation process.**

Acknowledgement from ACF of an electronic application's submission:

Applicants will be sent additional email(s) from ACF acknowledging that the application has been retrieved from Grants.gov by ACF. Receipt of these emails is not an indication that the application is accepted for competition.

Acknowledgement from ACF of receipt of a paper application:
ACF will provide acknowledgement of receipt of hard copy application packages submitted via mail.

IV.5. Intergovernmental Review

This program is covered under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," and 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities." Under the Executive Order, States may design their own processes for reviewing and commenting on proposed Federal assistance under covered programs.

Applicants should go to the following URL for the official list of the jurisdictions that have elected to participate in E.O. 12372 https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf.

Applicants from participating jurisdictions should contact their SPOC, as soon as possible, to alert them of their prospective applications and to receive instructions on their jurisdiction's procedures. Applicants must submit all required application materials to the SPOC and indicate the date of submission on the SF-424 at item 19.

Under 45 CFR § 100.8(a)(2), a SPOC has 60 days from the application due date to comment on proposed new awards.

SPOC comments may be submitted directly to ACF at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Grants Management, 330 C St. SW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20201.

Entities that meet the eligibility requirements of this funding opportunity are still eligible to apply for an award even if a State, Territory or Commonwealth, etc., does not have a SPOC or has chosen not to participate in the process. Applicants from non-participating jurisdictions need take no action with regard to E.O. 12372. Applications from Federally-recognized Indian Tribal governments are not subject to E.O. 12372.

IV.6. Funding Restrictions

Construction is not an allowable activity or expenditure under this award.

Purchase of real property is not an allowable activity or expenditure under this award.

Major renovation is not an allowable activity or expenditure under this award.

IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

Submit paper applications to the following address.

Submission by Mail
CB Operations Center
C/O LCG, INC
ATTN: HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0066
6000 Executive Blvd.
Suite 410
Rockville
MD
20852

V. Application Review Information

V.1. Criteria

Please note: With the exception of the notice of funding opportunity and relevant statutes and regulations, reviewers must not access, or review, any materials that are not part of the application documents. This includes information accessible on websites via hyperlinks that are referenced, or embedded, in the application. Reviewers must evaluate and score an application based on the documents that are presented in the application and must not refer to, or access, external links during the merit review.

Applications competing for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated using the criteria described in this section. Points will be allocated based on the extent to which the application proposal addresses each of the criteria listed. Applicants should address these criteria in their application materials, particularly in the project description and budget justification, as they are the basis upon which competing applications will be judged during the merit review. The required elements of the project description and budget justification may be found in *Section IV.2. The Project Description* of this funding opportunity.

OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE **Maximum Points:** 40

In reviewing the objectives and need for assistance reviewers will consider the extent to which:

A. The applicant described a quality plan for staff liaisons to support CIPs.
B. The applicant identified SMEs that have targeted expertise to support the purpose of this NOFO in delivering TA as described in *Section I. Program Description, Project Activities, Purpose.*
C. The applicant described staff with education and expertise in evaluation in child welfare available to support tailored, targeted, and universal TA.
D. The applicant detailed a strong plan to host regular constituency groups and learning experiences targeted toward the topics and audiences including for CIPs or their designees, regional or local cohorts, or on specific topics relevant to child welfare legal and judicial practice. The plan should detail how the applicant would support these events and obtain input from participants.
E. The applicant provides a strong plan to support programmatic aspects of annual,, in-person, regional or national CIP meetings.
F. The applicant describes a thoughtful plan for how it would support the integration of tailored, targeted, and universal TA.

G. The applicant provides a strong plan to advance peer connections and learning by publishing selected annual CIP Self-Assessment data.
H. The applicant has a convincing approach to support quality facilitation of groups in tailored and targeted TA to support thorough, open, and constructive communication.
I. The applicant describes a strong approach to developing a Local Court CQI universal product designed to help CIPs develop and manage local CQI efforts.
J. The applicant describes a strong approach to develop a synthesis on legal and judicial involvement in the CFSR in year 4. This should include an overview of successes and challenges and recommendations for improvements for the future that can be made to best meet shared broad system goals.
K. The applicant describes how it will provide for staff or consultants with expertise in equity.
L. The applicant describes how it will provide for staff or consultants with expertise in tribal child welfare and the ICWA to support the team as SME(s) for TA.
M. The applicant describes a plan to implement regular internal processes to support internal capacity building around advancing equity.
N. The applicant describes a plan to support a paid internship program for law school students. The plan should describe how outreach will be made to law schools with curricula relevant to equity and how the interns will be managed by the team.
O. The applicant describes strong plans for four universal products. These will include universal products on:
    1. Using broader civil legal representation to prevent unnecessary placements in foster care.
    2. The national needs and strategies for legal representation for kin caregivers for children and youth in foster care
    3. The legal needs of older youth in foster care and strategies for improvement.
    4. The needs and recommended approaches to support quality and equitable recruitment and retention of attorneys, judges, and other legal system professionals.

APPROACH **Maximum Points:** 20

In reviewing the Continuous Quality Improvement approach, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant has a strong overall CQI approach and:

A. The applicant describes a strong plan to develop annual profiles of legal and judicial strategies that demonstrate promising strategies and results.
B. The applicant describes a sound plan for aggregating and using annual quantitative and qualitative CIP Self-Assessment data.
C. The applicant described how it would employ regular CQI-based review of TA data and discussions and incorporate targeted internal capacity-building efforts where needs arise for liaisons, SMEs, and evaluators.
D. The applicant describes how it would develop a simple strategic plan for discussion with CB and support annual updates.

In reviewing the Innovation and Advancement approach, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

E. The applicant describes a plan to maintain a CIP library that was created under the prior cooperative agreement (CIPShare). This should include identifying new items developed by CIPs that will be useful to add to the library and a plan for staff with expertise in file-run software.
F. The applicant presents a strong plan for how it will support time for individual staff members to fill novel or emerging gaps in knowledge, skills, or resources that are in line with the overall purposes of the Center but not in areas that have arisen as a broader need.

EVALUATION **Maximum Points:** 10

In reviewing the evaluation information, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

A. The applicant presents a plan for developing an overall Center evaluation plan. This should focus more on plan development, as some key aspects are necessarily 'to be determined' by items under the other sections.
B. The applicant presents a sound plan for developing a tracking system for tailored and targeted TA. This should include quantitative and qualitative data points and be framed around CQI.
C. The applicant describes a plan for how it would regularly share data with Center staff to support internal CQI.
D. The applicant explains that it will coordinate evaluation activities with other CB-funded TA partners including those designed to support capacity building for state and tribal child welfare agencies. This should focus on a general approach to coordination as many pieces of this are still to be determined across other TA providers.
E. The applicant plans to have staff with appropriate expertise to support this evaluation. The proposal identifies appropriate performance measurement, interpreting data, and applying data-derived information to program quality improvement. The applicant describes how these staff are managed separately from the evaluation staff directly supporting TA.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY **Maximum Points:** 25

In reviewing the organizational capacity, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

A. The applicant demonstrates adequate experience with the administration of similar projects that would enable them to implement the proposed project effectively.
B. The proposed staff possesses sufficient relevant knowledge, experience, and capabilities to implement and manage a project of this size, scope, and complexity effectively.
C. The role, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed project staff position, including consultants, subcontractors, and/or partners, are clearly defined and appropriate to the successful implementation of the proposed project.
D. There is a sound plan for achieving the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks and ensuring quality.
E. The applicant's fiscal controls and accounting procedures would ensure prudent use, proper and timely disbursement, and accurate accounting of funds received under this NOFO.

BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION **Maximum Points:** 5

In reviewing the budget and budget justification, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

A. There is a clear and accurate line-item budget and budget justification to track project costs and activities that are attributed to each of the separate funding sources for each year of this project award.
B. The costs of the proposed project are reasonable and programmatically justified under each funding source, given the targeted population and community, the activities to be conducted, and the expected results and benefits.

V.2. Review and Selection Process

No award will be made under this funding opportunity on the basis of an incomplete application.

Initial ACF Screening
Disqualified applications are considered "non-responsive" and are excluded from the merit review process. Applicants will be notified of a disqualification determination by email or by USPS postal mail within 30 federal business days from the closing date of this NOFO.

Merit Review and Results
Applications competing for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated by review panels using only the criteria described in *Section V.1. Criteria* of this funding opportunity. Each panel is composed of experts with knowledge and experience in the area under review. Generally, review panels include three reviewers and one chairperson.

Results of the merit review are taken into consideration by ACF in the selection of projects for funding; however, merit review scores and rankings are not binding. Scores and rankings are only one element used in the award decision-making process. ACF reserves the right to consider preferences to fund organizations serving emerging, unserved, or under-served populations, including those populations located in pockets of poverty. In addition, ACF reserves the right to evaluate applications in the larger context of the overall portfolio by considering geographic distribution of federal funds (e.g., ensuring coverage of states, counties, or service areas) in its pre-award decisions.

ACF may elect not to fund applicants with management or financial problems that would indicate an inability to successfully complete the proposed project. In addition, ACF may elect to not allow a prime recipient to subaward if there is any indication that they are unable to properly monitor and manage subrecipients.

Applications may be funded in whole or in part. Successful applicants may be funded at an amount lower than that requested.

ACF may refuse to fund projects with what it regards as unreasonably high start-up costs for facilities or equipment, or for projects with unreasonably high operating costs.

Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants

ACF is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), https://sam.gov/reports/ei/static, before making any award in excess of the simplified acquisition

threshold over the period of performance. An applicant may review and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency has previously entered into FAPIIS. ACF will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in FAPIIS, 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 45 CFR § 75.205(a)(2) Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.

Approved but Unfunded Applications
Applications recommended for approval in the merit review process, but not selected for award may receive funding if additional funds become available in the current Fiscal Year. For those applications determined as “approved but unfunded,” notice will be given of the determination by email.

V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Announcement of awards and the disposition of applications will be provided to applicants at a later date. ACF staff cannot respond to requests for information regarding funding decisions prior to the official applicant notification.

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

VI.1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a NoA that sets forth the amount of funds awarded, the terms and conditions, the effective date, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The NoA will be signed by the Grants Officer and transmitted via email or by GrantSolutions, or the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), whichever is relevant.

Following the finalization of funding decisions, organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified by letter signed by the cognizant Program Office head. Any other correspondence that announces to a Principal Investigator, or a Project Director, that an application was selected is not an authorization to begin performance.

Recipients may translate the Federal award and other documents into another language. In the event of inconsistency between any terms and conditions of the Federal award and any translation into another language, the English language meaning will control. Where a significant portion of the recipient’s employees who are working on the Federal award are not fluent in English, the recipient must provide the Federal award in English and in the language(s) with which employees are more familiar.

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Awards issued under this funding opportunity are subject to 45 CFR Part 75 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards currently in effect or implemented during the period of award, other Department regulations and policies in effect at the time of award, and applicable statutory provisions. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is available at www.ecfr.gov. Unless otherwise noted in this section, administrative and national policy requirements that are applicable to discretionary awards are

available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements.

An application funded with the release of federal funds through an award does not constitute or imply compliance with federal regulations. Funded organizations are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations.

HHS Grants Policy Statement
ACF awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS), which covers basic award processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as well as important agency-specific requirements. The HHS GPS is available at https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/grants/grants/policies-regulations/hhsgps107.pdf.

VI.3. Reporting

Performance Progress Reports:
Semi-Annually

Reporting Requirements
Recipients will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports periodically throughout the project period. Information on reporting requirements is available on the ACF website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/manage-grant/reporting.

For planning purposes, the frequency of required reporting for awards made under this funding opportunity are as follows:

Financial Reports:
Semi-Annually
The Program Performance Report (PPR) (PDF) is the standard format used by many federal agencies to collect information around progress in meeting program goals and objectives. The PPR is most commonly submitted through GrantSolutions.

Recipients will be required to track and report award funds by each of the two funding sources on their SF 425 Federal Financial Report (FFR)and PPRs. Recipients must assign costs only to those activities allowable under each of the funding source's authorization.

VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s)

Program Office Contact
Scott
Trowbridge
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration For Children and Families
Children's Bureau
CB Operations Center C/O LCG, INC.
6000 Executive Blvd. Suite 410
Rockville
MD
20852

888-203-6161
cb@grantreview.org

Office of Grants Management Contact
Telina
Bennet-Reed
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration For Children and Families
Office of Grants Management
CB Operations Center, C/O LCG, INC.
6000 Executive Blvd. Suite 410
Rockville
MD
20852
888-203-6161
cb@grantreview.org

VIII. Other Information

Reference Websites

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) www.hhs.gov/.

Administration for Children and Families (ACF) www.acf.hhs.gov/.

ACF Funding Opportunities Forecasts and NOFOs www.grants.gov/.

ACF "Applying for an ACF Award" https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant.

ACF Property Guidance https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/real-property-and-tangible-personal-property

Grants.gov Accessibility Information https://www.grants.gov/accessibility-compliance

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) http://www.ecfr.gov/.

United States Code (U.S.C.) http://uscode.house.gov/.

Application Checklist

Applicants may use this checklist as a guide when preparing an application package.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Certification	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications*.	Submission is due by the application due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.* If it is not submitted with the application package,

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
		it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Referenced in *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* in the funding opportunity. To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to http://www.sam.gov.	A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants. Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application package or prior to award.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	section. They are required for applications that include only non-construction activities.	
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	"Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to award.
Table of Contents	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submit with the application by the due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Project Summary	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description.* The Project Summary is limited to one single-spaced page.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," and 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities"	Applicants should go to the following URL for the official list of the jurisdictions that have elected to participate in E.O. 12372 https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf	Submission of application materials is due to SPOC by the application due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
The Project Budget and Budget Justification	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*.	Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C. Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
The Project Description	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.

Appendix

NOFO References (Section I)

[1] 'States herein is used for brevity but includes eligible jurisdictions including Washington, D.C., the US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

[2] See generally, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/training-technical-assistance/technical-bulletin-faqs-independent-legal-representation

[3] See definitions for due process and family engagement in, https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/jcamp-vol-i-measures.pdf

[4] See, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/csfr_technical_bulletin_12.pdf; https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/document/download/MovRaV

[5] Program Instruction - State Court Improvement Program Grant ACYF-CB-PI-23-03 (2023), page 8.

[6]]https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/courts/resources/measuring-child-welfare-court-performance-review-of-resources

[7] Id. Many gaps of study in fundamental legal practice areas are noted in many places.

[8]https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/courts/judicial-court-and-attorney-measures-performance/

[9] 'Family engagement is used for brevity here and is meant to encompass engagement of children, youth, parents, kin, and other family members.

[10] See generally, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/technical_bulletin_faq_legal_representation.pdf

[11] All 2.x measures are due process measures. https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/document/download/MovRaV

[12]https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/jcamp-quick-start-guide.pdf

[13]https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/344177