



Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF)
Children's Bureau

Technology-Enhanced Adoption Recruitment and Matching Innovation Hubs (TE-ARM)

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CO-0040



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Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your [SAM.gov](#) and [Grants.gov](#) registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registrations are active and up to date.

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

You must have an active Grants.gov registration. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well.

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Apply by the application due date

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, August 21, 2026.



To help you find what you need, this NOFO uses internal links. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.



Step 1:

Review the Opportunity

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Basic information

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF)

Children's Bureau

To support the establishment of regional innovation hubs that use technology to improve how child welfare agencies recruit, identify, and match adoptive families for children awaiting permanency, and to scale effective approaches that improve outcomes.

Summary

Child welfare agencies continue to face challenges in recruiting and matching adoptive families for children awaiting permanency, due in part to outdated processes, limited data integration, and inconsistent access to effective tools. Most jurisdictions rely on static photo listing services, fragmented data systems, and manual caseworker knowledge to identify potential matches. While existing national recruitment resources provide important visibility for waiting children, there is a growing need for modern, technology-enabled approaches and tools that actively support caseworkers in timely, data-informed, and high-quality matching decisions.

ACF will fund regional innovation hubs to design, implement, and evaluate human-centered technology-enabled solutions that improve adoptive family recruitment and matching. These solutions may include data-informed recruitment tools, AI-assisted matching, and predictive analytics to accelerate permanency for children in foster care.

ACF expects to fund three regional innovation hubs—you must apply to the appropriate region:

- Eastern Region.
- Central Region.
- Western Region.

Innovation hubs will partner with pilot jurisdictions in their region to develop, deploy, and evaluate these tools; strengthen agency capacity; and support implementation through intensive technical assistance, training, and continuous quality improvement. Hubs will also disseminate tools, best practices, and lessons learned to jurisdictions across their region and collaborate nationally to promote shared learning.



Have questions?
See [Contacts and Support](#).

Key facts

Opportunity name:

Technology-Enhanced Adoption Recruitment and Matching Innovation Hubs (TE-ARM)

Opportunity number:

HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CO-0040

Federal assistance listing:

93.652

NOFO version: Original

Key dates

Application submission

deadline: Friday, August 21, 2026

Expected project start

date: September 30, 2026

See [intergovernmental review](#) for other

submission processes that may apply to this NOFO.

For the purposes of this NOFO, *pilot jurisdictions* must be public child welfare agencies that administer Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs at the state, territorial, tribal, or local level.

If awarded, recipients will focus on the following activities:

- Applied research, development, and testing of technology-enabled recruitment and matching solutions.
- Training, coaching, and technical assistance to support implementation.
- Advancement of interoperability and data standards.
- Implementation of privacy, security, and safeguards.
- Dissemination and knowledge sharing to support the broader field.

To support effective implementation of all program activities, each innovation hub must establish and implement a robust performance measurement and continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework to assess progress, inform decision-making, and drive continuous improvement.

Through these activities, the program aims to accelerate permanency, improve the quality and stability of adoptive placements, and strengthen the child welfare system's ability to use data and technology to support children and families.

Funding details

Type: Cooperative agreement

Expected total program funding: \$10,000,000

Total expected awards: 3

Minimum award amount for the first budget period (award floor): \$3,000,000

Maximum award amount for the first budget period (award ceiling): \$3,333,333

We plan to fund a five-year project period. Each project period has five one-year budget periods.

Note: The maximum award ceiling for year 1 is \$3, 333, 333. The maximum award ceiling amount for years 2, 3, 4, and 5 will increase to \$4,000,000, per year.

This is a multi-application funding opportunity. The funding ceiling is the same for all regions, and one award will be made per region.

Non-competing continuation awards will be issued. Grant recipients must demonstrate progress on meeting the goals of the project and coordination within the pilot jurisdictions.

Awards made under this funding opportunity are subject to federal funds availability.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity include:

- State, territorial, or local government child welfare agencies.
- Tribal child welfare agencies or tribal organizations.
- Public or private licensed child-placing agencies.
- Non-profit organizations with demonstrated experience in child welfare or technology innovation.
- For-profit entities with demonstrated experience in child welfare technology solutions.
- Community-based organizations serving children and families.
- Institutions of higher education with relevant research or technical capacity.
- Consortia or partnerships that include multiple entity types.

Other eligibility criteria

Individuals (including sole proprietorships), federal entities, and foreign entities **are not eligible** to apply.

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements **are eligible** for awards under this funding opportunity.

Select one region to serve

Each applicant must apply for one region only and must specify which region they are applying to serve. See the [National coverage and regional service model](#) section in the Program description for detailed information on regional structure.

An organization may serve as lead applicant for only one region but may participate as a partner, subrecipient, or consultant on applications for other regions provided this does not create conflicts of interest or limit their ability to fulfill their primary role.

Disqualifying factors

We will review your application to make sure it meets these responsiveness requirements.

We won't consider an application that:

- Requests funding above the [award ceiling](#).
- Is submitted after the [deadline](#).
- Is from an individual (including a sole proprietorship), a federal entity, or a foreign entity.
- Is received in paper format that didn't have a previously approved exemption from ACF.

Application limits

If you submit the same application more than once under this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), we will only acknowledge the last on-time submission.

An organization may submit only one application as lead applicant and may apply for only one region. An organization may participate as a partner or subrecipient on applications for other regions, provided such participation does not create conflicts of interest or compromise the organization's ability to fulfill its primary commitment.

Cost sharing

This program has no cost-sharing requirement, meaning you do not need to contribute to the costs of this project.

If you choose to include cost-sharing funds, we won't consider it during review. If you receive an award, we will include your voluntary commitment in the award, and you must report on the funds. If you don't provide your promised amount, we may have to decrease your award amount or use other enforcement actions.

Post-award requirements

Before you apply, make sure you understand the requirements that come with an award.

See [Step 6: Learn What Happens After Award](#) for information on regulations that apply, reporting, and more.

Statutory authority

This award is authorized under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) at 42 U.S.C. § 5113(b)(2).

Agency priorities

Required alignment with ACF Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles

The recipient of this award must implement any funds awarded under this NOFO to effectuate program goals or agency priorities in accordance with [ACF's vision, mission, values, priorities, & guiding principles](#) when authorized. Funded activities must advance ACF's vision of resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure children, youth, families, and communities, and support ACF's mission to foster health and well-being through effective, accountable, and compassionate human services when awarded in any programs that authorize these priorities. This NOFO also aligns with the [A Home for Every Child](#) initiative, which is intended to accelerate state innovation in foster home recruitment, retention, and system improvements that directly impact child welfare outcomes and permanency.

Consistent with ACF's values, in carrying out any project that is funded under this NOFO, the recipient is required to adhere to the following principle:

1. **Program integrity and fiscal stewardship:** Administer funds in accordance with all applicable federal statutes, regulations, and award conditions; maintain strong internal controls; and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

The recipient is also required to adhere to the following principles when consistent with the authority and scope of the award and its activities:

2. **Evidence-based and outcome-focused practices:** Design and deliver services using evidence-based or evidence-informed approaches, establish measurable performance goals, and use data to monitor outcomes and drive continuous improvement.
3. **Partnership and local leadership:** Coordinate with state, tribal, territorial, local, and community partners, as appropriate, and tailor services to meet community-identified needs while respecting local decision-making authority.

In addition, in keeping with ACF's priorities, the recipient must administer any project that is awarded under this NOFO in accordance with the following objectives when consistent with the scope of the award and its activities in programs that are authorized to advance them:

4. **Family stability and child well-being:** Strengthen families, promote safe and stable home environments, and improve outcomes for children and youth through prevention-focused and developmentally appropriate services.

5. **Work, self-sufficiency, and economic mobility:** Support pathways to employment, job retention, and economic independence for individuals and families, including through workforce development, education, and supportive services.
6. **High-quality early care and learning:** Where applicable, invest in high-quality early childhood programs that support school readiness, healthy development, and long-term success.

The recipient must demonstrate ongoing compliance with these values and priorities, in all programs that are authorized to advance them, through program design, implementation, reporting, and evaluation. Failure to meaningfully align funded activities with the applicable requirements may result in corrective action, additional reporting requirements, or other enforcement actions consistent with federal grant regulations found at 2 CFR Part 200 and the terms and conditions of this award.

Program description

Purpose

Technology-Enhanced Adoption Recruitment and Matching (TE-ARM) Innovation

Hubs will serve as regional hubs of excellence that design, build, implement, test, and evaluate technology-enabled tools to improve how child welfare agencies recruit, license, and match adoptive families with children awaiting adoption. This program reflects ACF's commitment to results and evidence by focusing on measurable improvements in permanency outcomes, placement stability, and system performance.

This program focuses exclusively on children in the public child welfare system who have, or may develop, an adoption permanency goal, including:

- Children with an established adoption plan.
- Children whose permanency goal may transition to adoption.
- Children in the adoptive placement process.

Each innovation hub will partner with a minimum of two pilot jurisdictions within its assigned region, including at least one identified at time of application:

- **Design and build** secure, interoperable technology tools tailored to jurisdictional needs.
- **Implement and test** these tools in real-world settings through structured pilots.
- **Continuously monitor and evaluate** their impact on timeliness, match quality, and placement stability.
- **Disseminate** reusable tools, standards, and implementation resources for national adoption.

All data will remain under the ownership and control of the originating jurisdiction. Innovation hubs will not create or maintain a federal database. Instead, they will support jurisdictions in building the infrastructure and interoperability needed to enable technology-enhanced matching while maintaining full data sovereignty.

This program reflects ACF's commitment to results and evidence by focusing on measurable improvements in permanency outcomes, placement stability, and system performance.

Advances in secure data sharing, interoperability standards, and decision-support technologies create a significant opportunity to modernize adoptive recruitment and matching processes.

When designed, implemented, and refined, technology-enabled tools can:

- Surface potential matches that may not otherwise be identified through manual processes.
- Accelerate the matching process and reduce time to permanency.
- Support targeted recruitment by identifying gaps in the available pool of adoptive families.
- Enable cross-jurisdictional matching while respecting state, tribal, and territorial data governance requirements.
- Identify key matching characteristics associated with successful placements and inform post-adoption supports.
- Reduce administrative burden, allowing caseworkers to focus on family engagement and support.
- Improve placement stability through better-informed matching decisions.
- Generate actionable insights to strengthen recruitment, matching, and post-adoption practices.
- Increase transparency in how potential matches are identified and considered.
- Provide decision-support tools that strengthen, but do not replace, professional judgment.

This program reflects ACF's commitment to results and evidence by focusing on measurable improvements in permanency outcomes, placement stability, and system performance.

National coverage and regional service model

ACF has defined three national service regions:

- **Eastern Region:** Northeast & Southeast
 - States/Territory: CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, DE, DC, MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL, PR.
- **Central Region:** Central/South Central
 - States: IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI, KY, TN, AL, MS, AR, LA, OK, TX.
- **Western Region:** West & Pacific
 - States: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY, Pacific Territories.

Tribal nations may align with any region based on geography and partnerships. Cross-region collaboration is encouraged for multi-state and multi-jurisdictional initiatives.

Each innovation hub will:

- Serve as the primary technology and implementation resource within its assigned region.
- Provide tailored support based on jurisdictional readiness and capacity.
- Partner with pilot jurisdictions to design, implement, and test solutions.
- Collaborate with other hubs to share learning, align approaches, and avoid duplication.
- Develop tools and resources that can be reused across jurisdictions nationwide.

While hubs are regionally anchored, cross-jurisdictional collaboration is encouraged where necessary to support effective matching, including partnerships with implementation partners outside the assigned region.

This program supports the ACF Priority Area of Gold-Standard Research by incorporating the principles of HHS's Gold Standard Science into the evaluation of the grant program, with a focus on the results being transparent, collaborative, and interdisciplinary.

Project requirements

Project objectives

The objectives of this program are to:

- Improve the timeliness, quality, and stability of adoptive placements for children and youth in foster care.
- Enhance child welfare agencies' capacity to use technology, data, and innovative tools to support recruitment and matching.
- Strengthen data integration, quality, and interoperability to enable more informed decision-making.
- Support the adoption and effective use of technology by the child welfare workforce.
- Promote collaboration, shared learning, and alignment across jurisdictions and innovation hubs.
- Generate, test, and disseminate scalable tools, resources, and best practices for national use.

Program activities

Recipients must carry out the following five core activity areas:

Applied research, development, and testing

Innovation hubs will design, build, and refine technology solutions that support adoptive recruitment and matching. Hubs are expected to partner with pilot jurisdictions to support real-world implementation of recruitment and matching. Pilot projects can include a wide range of topics tailored to the agency's individual needs, readiness, and goals. We are particularly interested in projects in the following areas:

- Development of data-informed recruitment tools to identify gaps in the foster/adoptive parent pool and target outreach strategies.
- Creation of matching support systems that align child characteristics, needs, and preferences with family capacity, characteristics, and readiness.
- Development of interoperability solutions to enable secure data exchange across jurisdictions and support cross-jurisdictional matching.
- Use of advanced analytics approaches—including predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, or other data-driven methods, where appropriate—to support matching, placement stability, disruption prevention, and identification of factors associated with successful adoptions.
- Development of tools that support family engagement, including helping families learn about waiting children and express interest.
- Implementation of iterative testing and refinement processes to assess tool performance, usability, and impact on recruitment and matching outcomes, and to inform ongoing improvements prior to and during deployment.
- Engaging caseworkers, families, youth, and other stakeholders in the design, testing, and refinement of tools to ensure usability and relevance in real-world practice.

All tools must be designed to support human decision-making, with technology augmenting—rather than replacing—professional judgment.

Training, coaching, and technical assistance

Innovation hubs will provide comprehensive implementation support to participating jurisdictions.

Activities should include:

- Readiness assessments to evaluate infrastructure, staffing, and data capacity.
- Change management support to integrate tools into existing workflows.
- Training for caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators.

- Ongoing coaching and troubleshooting.
- Continuous quality improvement support based on performance data.
- Time-limited staffing support, where needed, to assist with implementation.

Innovation hubs must provide differentiated levels of technical assistance aligned to jurisdiction roles within the program. Pilot jurisdictions and their approved partners will receive intensive, hands-on support, including tool deployment, training, workflow integration, coaching, and continuous quality improvement.

Innovation hubs are required to make tools, training resources, and shared learning opportunities available to non-pilot jurisdictions within their region. Activities for non-pilot sites are intended to support broader dissemination and do not include intensive implementation support.

Interoperability and data standards

Innovation hubs will strengthen the field's ability to securely share and use data.

Activities should include:

- Development and promotion of common data standards for adoptive matching.
- Creation of integration guidance for connecting matching tools with existing Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)/Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) and other systems.
- Support for data governance frameworks.
- Facilitation of data sharing agreements across jurisdictions.
- Documentation of best practices for data security and responsible data use.

Privacy, security, and safeguards

Innovation hubs must ensure responsible use of sensitive data.

Requirements include:

- Privacy-by-design approaches that minimize and protect data.
- Compliance with federal and state security standards (FedRAMP or equivalent).
- Transparency in how tools function and generate outputs.
- Human oversight of all decision-support tools.
- Clear processes for addressing errors or concerns.

These safeguards reflect ACF's commitment to program integrity and accountability - ensuring technology serves children and families ethically while maintaining public trust in the responsible use of federal resources.

Dissemination and knowledge sharing

Innovation hubs will generate and share resources, informed by implementation experience and lessons learned, to support a national audience.

Deliverables should include but are not limited to:

- Open-source tools and technical documentation, where permitted.
- Implementation toolkits and playbooks.
- Data standards and integration guides.
- Evaluation findings and outcome data.
- Case studies and lessons learned.
- Webinars, peer learning opportunities, and presentations.
- Collaboration with other innovation hubs to align dissemination strategies, share findings, and develop common resources, standards, and implementation guidance where appropriate to support a coordinated national approach.

All public-facing materials must be Section 508 compliant and adaptable for use by other jurisdictions.

All program activities should be implemented in alignment with the project performance evaluation plan requirements described below.

Project performance evaluation plan

Each innovation hub must establish and implement a robust performance measurement and CQI framework to assess progress, inform decision-making, and drive ongoing improvements.

Performance measures may apply at different levels, including the innovation hub, pilot jurisdictions, or both. Measures should be clearly defined and supported by processes for data collection, reporting, and use across partners.

Performance measurement

Innovation hubs are expected to establish and implement performance measurement approaches that include process, outcome, systems measures as well as CQI and data improvement as appropriate. We are particularly interested in the following areas (recipients may track additional or alternative measures that align with their approved work plan).

Process measures:

- Number of jurisdictions served and type of technical assistance provided.
- Number of tools developed, tested, and implemented.
- Tool utilization rates, including frequency and consistency of use.

- Caseworker and administrator satisfaction with tools and support.
- Fidelity of implementation.

Outcome measures:

- Time from adoption goal to adoptive placement.
- Time from child identification to match identification.
- Time from adoptive placement to finalization.
- Number of potential families identified per child.
- Placement stability, including disruption and dissolution rates.
- Match quality indicators, as defined by jurisdictions.
- Rate of matches resulting in placement.
- Recruitment effectiveness, including alignment between families recruited and children's needs.

System measures:

- Improvements in data quality.
- Interoperability achievements across systems and jurisdictions.
- Cost-effectiveness of tools and implementation approaches.
- Level of integration of tools into agency workflows and systems.
- Jurisdiction readiness for scaling tools beyond pilot sites.
- Scalability and replicability of solutions across jurisdictions.

Continuous quality improvement (CQI)

Innovation hubs must implement structured CQI processes that include:

- Regular data review cycles (e.g., quarterly).
- Use of performance data to refine tools, implementation strategies, and technical assistance approaches.
- Ongoing feedback loops with pilot jurisdictions to inform adjustments and improvements.

Innovation hubs must:

- Establish baseline measures at project outset.
- Set annual performance targets.
- Report on progress on a quarterly basis.

Use of data for improvement

Performance data must be used to:

- Assess effectiveness of recruitment and matching tools.
- Identify areas for improvement in implementation and technical assistance.
- Inform iterative refinement of tools and strategies.
- Support decision-making related to scaling and replication.

(NOTE: Consistent with the PRA of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, under this NOFO, ACF will not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information covered by such Act, displays a currently valid OMB control number, or fewer than 10 people are asked to respond.)

Partner readiness and pilot requirements

Technology innovation succeeds only when it meets real-world needs and is implemented with strong partnerships. Recipients are expected to:

- **Identify at least one pilot** jurisdiction within their proposed region at time of application that has formally committed to participate.
- **Demonstrate a plan** to secure at least one additional pilot jurisdiction within 6 months of award resulting in a minimum of two active pilot jurisdictions.
- **Submit letters of commitment** from at least one pilot jurisdiction with the application.
- **Establish formal partnerships** through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or data sharing agreements within 6 months of award.
- **Launch pilot activities** within 6 months of award.
- **Budget** must propose a clear, detailed, and feasible budget that demonstrates sufficient and appropriate investment in pilot jurisdiction implementation, including staffing, infrastructure, training, data capacity, and ongoing support throughout the project period.

Pilot jurisdictions are responsible for the placement and permanency planning of children in foster care and must have the authority, data access, and operational responsibility necessary to implement and test technology-enabled recruitment and matching solutions within real-world child welfare practice.

Pilot jurisdictions may partner with *implementation partners* (e.g., licensed child-placing agencies or other organizations) that support service delivery; however, these partners do not replace the requirement for a Title IV-E agency to serve as the lead pilot jurisdiction. Implementation partners are entities that support pilot jurisdiction implementation activities (e.g., licensed child-placing agencies or other jurisdiction-

affiliated organizations). These entities must be formally connected to the pilot jurisdictions and play a direct role in implementation but are not considered pilot jurisdictions themselves.

Organizational capacity

Recipients must demonstrate organizational capacity in both:

- Technology expertise, including the ability to design, develop, implement, and maintain secure, interoperable, and user-centered technology solutions.
- Child welfare practice expertise, including knowledge of child welfare systems, adoption and permanency practice, and experience working with child welfare agencies and stakeholders.

Recipients may demonstrate the required expertise through one or more of the following approaches:

- A single organization with both technology and child welfare expertise.
- A lead organization partnered with one or more entities providing complementary expertise.
- A consortium with clearly defined roles and governance across multiple organizations.

Expected outcomes

TE-ARM Innovation Hubs are expected to partner with pilot jurisdictions to:

- Reduce time to adoptive placement.
- Increase successful matches between children and families.
- Improve placement stability and permanency outcomes.
- Reduce administrative burden on caseworkers.
- Strengthen data infrastructure and decision-making capacity.
- Produce validated, scalable tools and approaches for national use.

Protection of sensitive or confidential information

This program operates under a fundamental principle: **Child and family data belongs to the jurisdiction that collected it, not to the federal government or the innovation hub.**

Innovation hubs will:

- NOT create a centralized federal database of children or families.
- NOT require jurisdictions to share data with ACF beyond standard reporting requirements.

- NOT retain jurisdiction data after technical assistance relationships end (unless specifically authorized).
- Respect each jurisdiction's data governance policies and legal requirements.

Innovation hubs MAY:

- Access jurisdiction data under formal agreements (MOUs/DSAs) for the limited purpose of building and testing tools.
- Aggregate and de-identify data for research and evaluation purposes (with jurisdiction permission).
- Facilitate peer jurisdiction data sharing for cross-state matching (with all parties' consent).

Collaboration and learning infrastructure

Cross-center collaboration

The innovation hubs will function as a **national network**, not isolated regional projects.

ACF will work collaboratively with all TE-ARM innovation hubs to facilitate:

- Quarterly meetings across all innovation hubs to share learning and coordinate activities.
- Joint development of common standards and tools where appropriate.
- Peer review of tools and approaches.
- Collaborative problem-solving on shared challenges.
- Cross-regional partnerships to enhance and promote matching of children awaiting adoption with adoptive parents.

Accessibility and artifact standards

All products developed with federal funds must be:

- **Section 508 compliant** for accessibility.
- **Delivered in editable formats**(not just PDFs) so other jurisdictions can adapt them.
- **Clearly licensed for reuse** (Creative Commons or similar for non-code; open-source licenses for code where appropriate).
- **Well-documented** with implementation guidance.

Cooperative agreement—Description of ACF's involvement

As cooperative agreements, these awards involve substantial federal involvement.

ACF's involvement will include:

- Participate in the awardee's governance structures and strategic planning.
- Facilitate coordination among the awardees.
- Convene national learning communities and dissemination activities.
- Monitor progress, outcomes, and compliance with federal requirements.
- Provide policy guidance on privacy, civil rights, and ethical technology use.

Funding policies and limitations

Changes in HHS regulations

As of October 1, 2025, HHS adopted [2 CFR 200](#), with some exceptions included in [2 CFR 300](#). These regulations replace those in 45 CFR 75.

General policies

- We will only make awards if this program receives funding. If Congress appropriates funds for this purpose, we will move forward with the review and award process.
- Support beyond the first budget period will depend on:
 - Appropriation of funds.
 - Satisfactory progress in meeting your project's objectives.
 - A decision that continued funding is in the government's best interest.
- If we receive more funding for this program, we will consider:
 - Funding more applicants.
 - Extending the period of performance.
 - Awarding supplemental funding.
- To the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders, you may not use funds from this NOFO for any diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEI and DEIA) activities. This includes:
 - DEI- or DEIA-related research.

- Activities that discriminate or show preference based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or other protected traits.
- Any efforts that promote a “discriminatory equity ideology.”
- To the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders, ACF will also not allow funds awarded under this NOFO to support any services or activities that inculcate or promote gender ideology.

For guidance on other types of costs that we restrict or do not allow, see General Provisions for Selected Items of Costs of the Uniform Guidance, [2 CFR part 200](#).

Program-specific limitations and policies

We do not allow the following costs under this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO):

- Construction.
- Purchase of real property.
- Major renovation.

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are those shared across multiple projects and not easily separated.

To charge indirect costs you can select one of two methods:

Method 1 — Approved rate. If you currently have an indirect cost rate approved by your cognizant federal agency, you may use that rate.

Method 2 — *De minimis* rate. If you do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate, you may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate (see [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#)). This rate may be up to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). See the definition of MTDC ([2 CFR 200.1](#)). You can use this rate indefinitely.

You may not charge costs included in your indirect cost pool as direct costs.

Subawards

As the prime recipient, you must maintain a substantive role in the project. This means that you conduct funded activities and provide services necessary and integral to completing the project.

Monitoring your subrecipient’s activities alone as described in [2 CFR 200.332](#) is not a substantive role.

We do not fund awards where your role is primarily a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute.

All subrecipients must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Subrecipients must meet the [eligibility requirements](#) of this NOFO.

Salary rate limitation

The salary rate limitation in the current appropriations act applies to this program. You may not use awarded funds to pay a salary at a higher rate than the rate for Executive Level II.

For the Executive Level II salary, please see [the Office of Personnel Management information on executive and senior level employee pay](#).

The salary limitation reflects a person's base salary (including any portion of the salary that is paid with indirect costs). It does not include fringe benefits or any income the person is allowed to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization.

This salary limitation also applies to subawards, contracts, and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

Program income

If you earn any money from your award-supported project activities (known as program income), you must use it for the purposes and under the conditions of the award. Find more about program income at [2 CFR 200.307](#).



Step 2:

Get Ready to Apply

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Find the application package

The application package has all the forms you need to apply. You can find it at this NOFO's Grants.gov opportunity page. Then select the Package tab.

This NOFO has multiple "Grant Opportunity Packages" reflecting each region.

Note: Do NOT use the **Apply** button on the **View Grant Opportunity** screen.

1. Click on the Package tab.
2. Scroll down and identify the Grant Opportunity Package you want to apply to using the competition title
3. Click the **Apply** hyperlink in the "Actions" column. You will be directed to the Apply for Grant Opportunity page.
4. Click on the red Apply button. This Apply button will take you to Grants.gov to login and submit your application.
5. Follow the guidance for applying and uploading the application and associated documents.

We recommend that you select the **Subscribe button** from the View Grant Opportunity page for this NOFO to get updates.

If you can't use Grants.gov to download application materials or have other technical difficulties, including issues with application submission, [contact Grants.gov](#) for assistance.

Get registered

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov to apply. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today.

To register:

- Go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and select Get Started. From the same page, you can also select the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.
- You must agree to the [financial assistance general certifications and representations \[PDF\]](#) specifically. Those for contracts are different.

When you register, you will also receive your required Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

Once you register:

- You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.
- If your organization has multiple UEIs, use the one associated with your physical location.

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Need help? See [Contacts and Support](#).

Learn more

Visit [Applying for an ACF Grant Award](#) on the ACF Grants page.



Step 3:

Build Your Application

In this step

Application checklist [28](#)

Application contents and format [30](#)

Application checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need to apply. You will find the forms in Grants.gov.

File one: Narratives

Use the Project Narrative Attachment form.

Component	Included in page limit?
☐ Table of contents	Yes
☐ Project summary	Yes
☐ Project narrative	Yes
☐ Line-item budget and budget narrative	Yes

File two: Attachments

Insert each in a single Other Attachments form.

Component	Included in page limit?
☐ ACF Priorities Alignment Attestation	No
☐ Indirect cost agreement	Yes
☐ Legal proof of nonprofit status	No
☐ Legal proof of for-profit status	No
☐ Legal proof of small businesses	No
☐ Organizational capacity supporting information (including organization chart)	Yes
☐ Third-party agreements	Yes
☐ Maintenance of effort certification	No
☐ Protection of human subjects certification	No
☐ Letters of commitment	Yes

Standard forms

Use each required form in Grants.gov.

Component	Included in page limit?
☐ Project Abstract Summary	No
☐ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	No
☐ Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	No
☐ (SF-424B) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs	No
☐ Key Contacts	No
☐ Grants.gov Lobbying form	No
☐ Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	No
☐ Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	No

Application contents and format

You will submit two files plus the [standard forms](#) in the application package.

Your organization's authorized official must certify your application.

See [intergovernmental review](#) to find out if you need to make any other submissions.

Required format

Page limit for file one and file two combined: 75 pages.

File format: Portable Document Format (PDF) is recommended, but not required. ACF supports the following file formats when you attach files to the Project Narrative Attachment form and the Other Attachments form:

Accepted file formats

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

Document formats

Paper size: 8 ½ inches x 11 inches

Margins: 1 inch all around

Language: English

If possible, include page numbers.

Do not include external links to information you want reviewers to assess because reviewers will score the application solely on information provided in the application.

Fonts

Font: Times New Roman

Color: Black

Size: 12-point font

Footnotes and text in tables and graphics may be 10-point.

Spacing

Table of contents: Must be single-spaced

Project summary: Must be single-spaced

Project narrative: Must be double-spaced

Line-item budget and budget narrative: Can be single-spaced

Attachments: Can be single-spaced

Tables and footnotes throughout: Can be single-spaced

See [disqualifying factors](#) to understand what may disqualify your application from consideration.

File one

To submit file one, you will use the Project Narrative Attachment form found in the Grants.gov application package for this NOFO.

This file includes:

- Table of contents.
- Project summary, one page.
- Project narrative.
- Line-item budget and budget narrative.

Table of contents

At the beginning of file one, insert a table of contents that guides a reader through the contents of both files in your application. If possible, include links to the relevant content in file one.

Project summary

Provide a one-page summary of the project description. Do not cross-reference to other parts of your application. The summary must include:

- At the top, the project title, applicant name, address, phone numbers, email addresses, and any website URL.
- A brief description of the project, including the needs and population you will address, your proposed services or research questions.

Project narrative

The project narrative is where you address all your proposed activities. It is a critical section of your application, which we evaluate using [merit review criteria](#) and rank based on application scores.

Remember that substance and measurable outcomes are more important than length. We are particularly interested in project narratives that convey strategies for achieving intended performance.

In it, you must:

- Explain how the project will meet the purpose of the NOFO, as described in [the program description section](#).
- Make sure your narrative is clear, concise, and complete.
- Use cross-referencing rather than repetition.
- Be sure to include any required supporting documents noted. You generally provide these in your [attachments](#).
- Use the headings and order of the sections that follow.

Purpose and need

Geographic location

Provide the precise physical location of your project and boundaries of the area you will serve. If you will include any subrecipients in your project that will serve specific geographic areas include their locations as well.

Regional assignment (see Approach criterion 2.4)

Applicants will identify the region they propose to serve through the submission of their application and must describe the geographic area covered by the project, including any subrecipients or partner jurisdictions, as well as how the project will effectively operate within the selected region.

See the **Regional Assignment** section in Eligibility for requirements and the [National Coverage & Regional Service Model](#) section for additional context.

Objectives

State your main objectives and any sub-objectives. Address how the objectives stated relate to the overall purpose of this program and describe how you will achieve the objectives.

Explain how the project will meet the [project objectives](#).

Response

Approach

Outline your action plan. Describe the scope of your proposed project and describe in detail how you will accomplish it. Account for all functions or activities you identify in your application.

Explain potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing your project goals. Explain the strategies you will use to address them.

You must describe a clear, feasible, and well-organized approach to achieving the objectives of this award. Your approach should be organized by objective and explain how the activities you propose will achieve the intended outcomes.

Propose an approach that addresses all core program activities. Within the organization of your approach by objective, you must clearly describe how the following program activities will be carried out:

Applied research, development, and testing:

Design, build, and iteratively refine technology-enabled recruitment and matching solutions that are user-centered, data-informed, and support human decision-making. Describe how caseworkers, administrators, youth, families, and other stakeholders will be engaged in the design, testing, refinement, and implementation of proposed tools and approaches.

Training, coaching, and technical assistance:

Provide comprehensive implementation support to pilot jurisdictions, including readiness assessment, training, workflow integration, and ongoing coaching and continuous quality improvement.

Interoperability and data standards:

Strengthen data integration and sharing by developing and applying common data standards, supporting system interoperability, and advancing data governance practices.

Privacy, security, and safeguards:

Ensure responsible and ethical use of data through privacy-by-design approaches, compliance with applicable security standards, transparency, and appropriate human oversight.

Dissemination and knowledge sharing:

Develop and share tools, resources, and lessons learned to support broader adoption, replication, and alignment across jurisdictions and innovation hubs.

You should focus on how these activities will be implemented, integrated and evaluated, rather than restating the program requirements. All program activities must

be implemented in alignment with the project performance evaluation plan requirements listed in the program description.

Project timeline and milestones

Provide a timeline for your project that includes milestones. To do so:

- Organize the information by task and subtask, showing related milestones.
- Provide monthly or quarterly quantitative projections for tasks you plan to complete and by when. For example, provide the number of people you plan to serve or the number of a certain activity you plan to complete by a specific date.
- Provide target dates for activities you can't quantify.
- Cover the full period of performance in your timeline.

Logic model

You must submit a logic model for designing, managing, and evaluating the project. A logic model is a diagram that:

- Presents how inputs drive activities to produce outputs, outcomes, and the ultimate goals of the proposed project.
- Explains the links among project elements.
- Targets the identified objectives and goals of the project.

While there are many versions of logic models, for the purposes of this funding opportunity, the logic model may include the connections between:

- Inputs such as additional resources, organizational profile, collaborative partners, key staff, and budget.
- Target population, such as the individuals to be served or identified needs.
- Activities, mechanisms, and processes such as evidence-based practices, best practices, approach, key intervention and evaluation components, and continuous quality improvement efforts.
- Outputs, which include the immediate and direct results of program activities.
- Outcomes, which include the short- and long-term results you expect the project to achieve. These are typically described as changes in people or systems.
- Project goals, such as overarching objectives and reasons for proposing the project.

You must submit a logic model that clearly reflects the design and requirements of the TE-ARM Innovation Hub model. The logic model must demonstrate how the proposed project will lead to improved recruitment and matching outcomes for children awaiting adoption.

At a minimum, the logic model must:

Reflect pilot-based implementation

- Clearly identify how activities will be implemented across at least two pilot jurisdictions.
- Show how pilot implementation will expand or scale to additional jurisdictions over time (if proposed).

Integrate core program components

The logic model must explicitly show the relationship between:

- Technology development and refinement.
- Pilot implementation activities.
- Training, coaching, and technical assistance.
- Data integration, interoperability, and governance.
- CQI processes.

Demonstrate use of data and CQI

- Show how performance data will be collected, analyzed, and used to inform iterative improvements.
- Include feedback loops between pilot jurisdictions and innovation hub activities.

Define measurable outputs and outcomes

- Identify key outputs (e.g., tools developed, jurisdictions served, staff trained).
- Identify short-term outcomes (e.g., increased identification of potential matches, improved data quality).
- Identify intermediate outcomes (e.g., improved match quality, increased tool utilization).
- Identify long-term outcomes aligned with program goals (e.g., reduced time to permanency, improved placement stability).

Align with program performance measures

- Demonstrate alignment with the performance measures described in the Program. Description section, including process, outcome, and system-level measures.

Reflect human-centered and practice-informed design

- Show how input from caseworkers, administrators, youth, and families will inform design, implementation, and refinement of solutions.

Dissemination and broader field impact

- Show how tools, resources and lessons learned will be disseminated to jurisdictions beyond pilot sites to support broader adoption and impact.

- Identify dissemination activities and outputs (e.g. Toolkits, training materials, webinars, implementation guides, peer learning opportunities).
- Demonstrate how dissemination will contribute to broader system improvements, including increased adoption of tools, improved practices and alignment across jurisdictions.

You should ensure that the logic model clearly illustrates how all major components of the proposed project work together to achieve the intended outcomes. The logic model should be specific, coherent, and consistent with the project narrative.

Impact

Project performance evaluation plan

Describe how you will evaluate your project's performance and how it will contribute to continuous quality improvement. This plan must describe:

- How you will monitor ongoing activities and progress toward the project's goals and objectives.
- The inputs, key activities, and expected outcomes of the funded activities. Inputs might include your collaborative partners, key staff, budget, service processes, or other resources.
- How you will measure the inputs, activities, and outcomes.
- How you will use the resulting information to improve your funded activities.
- Any processes that support overall data quality.
- The organizational systems and processes you will use to track performance outcomes.
- How your organization will collect and manage data in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes. This might include assigned skilled staff, data management software, and data integrity.
- Any potential obstacles to implementing the project performance evaluation and how you will address them.
- A timeline for how you will review information from the performance evaluation and apply it to your ongoing project.

You must propose a performance measurement and CQI approach that aligns with those described in the program description and supports ongoing learning across the innovation hub and pilot jurisdictions.

The evaluation plan should demonstrate how you will:

- Track performance across key domains, including implementation progress (e.g., jurisdictions served, tools developed and used), outcomes (e.g., timeliness to

permanency, match rates, placement stability), and system improvements (e.g., data quality, interoperability, and integration into workflows).

- Establish a structured performance framework, including baseline measures at project outset, annual performance targets, and regular (at least quarterly) data collection and reporting.
- Implement CQI processes across the innovation hub activities and pilot jurisdictions implementation, including routine data review cycles, feedback loops with jurisdictions, and use of performance data to refine tools, implementation strategies, and technical assistance. Include feedback loops between pilot jurisdictions and innovation hub activities to support continuous learning and adaptation.
- Use data to inform decision-making and scaling, including identifying what is working, addressing implementation challenges, and guiding iterative improvement and broader dissemination of effective approaches.

You should demonstrate how performance measurement and CQI processes will be embedded throughout the project and used to continuously improve implementation, outcomes, and scalability.

Expected outcomes

Identify the outcomes you plan to achieve from the project. Outcomes should relate to the overall program as described in the program description section. If research is part of the proposed work, outcomes must include hypothesized results and implications of the proposed research.

Resources and capabilities

Organizational capacity

Provide the following information for your full project team, including the applicant organization and any cooperating partners, contractors, and subrecipients:

- Provide evidence that your team has the relevant experience and expertise needed to carry out your project.
- Describe your team's experience (including any partnering organizations, including but not limited to, community-based and faith-based organizations) with administering, developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating similar projects.
- Provide evidence that your team, including partnering organizations, has the organizational capability to fulfill their roles and functions effectively.
- You must disclose your plan to enter into subaward agreements. If planning subawards, describe the work each subrecipient will complete.

- Describe prior experience integrating technology or data-driven tools into child welfare workflows, decision-making processes, or operational practice environments.
- You must demonstrate readiness to implement the project through partnerships with public child welfare agencies.
- Describe the governance and management structure for coordinating across partners, pilot jurisdictions, implementation partners, subrecipients and other collaborating organizations.
- You must:
 - Identify at least one pilot jurisdiction within the proposed region at the time of application that has formally committed to participate.
 - Submit a letter of commitment from the identified pilot jurisdiction with the application.
 - Describe a clear and feasible plan to secure at least one additional pilot jurisdiction within the first 6 months of the project period, resulting in a minimum of two active pilot jurisdictions.
 - Describe each identified pilot jurisdiction's readiness, including data infrastructure, leadership support, and capacity to participate.
 - Describe how staffing, technical assistance, resource allocation, and project management structures will support implementation across multiple pilot jurisdictions simultaneously.
- Applications that propose more than two pilot jurisdictions may be viewed favorably, if you demonstrate sufficient capacity to support multiple jurisdictions effectively.
- Have responsibility for placement and permanency planning for children in foster care.
- Have the authority, data access, and operational capacity to implement and test proposed solutions.
- Commit staff time and resources to support implementation and evaluation activities.
- Demonstrate organizational capacity in both:
 - **Technology expertise**, including the ability to design, develop, implement, and maintain secure, interoperable, and user-centered technology solutions.
 - **Child welfare practice expertise**, including knowledge of child welfare systems, adoption and permanency practice, and experience working with child welfare agencies and stakeholders.

- Provide some supporting information in the organizational capacity supporting information section of your [attachments](#).

Current and pending funding support

Provide a list of your current and pending funding for ongoing projects and proposals. Include all sources, such as federal, state, and local governments, public or private foundations, and for-profit organizations.

Indicate which projects and proposals require committed time from the project director, principal investigator, or other key personnel of the project you are proposing in this application.

Show the total award amount, awarding entity, and the amount of time each key staff member will devote to each project.

Plan for oversight of federal award funds and activities

You must ensure proper award oversight. The regulation that governs this oversight is [2 CFR part 200](#). It includes standards for:

- 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 your framework to make sure that your federal funds and activities have proper oversight. Include:

- A description of the governance, policies and procedures, and systems you use for record-keeping and financial management.
- A description of the procedures you use to identify and mitigate risks and issues. These might include audit findings, continuous performance assessment findings, and monitoring.
- The key staff who will be responsible for maintaining oversight of program staff and any partners or subrecipients.

Project sustainability plan

You must propose a plan for project sustainability after the period of federal funding ends. We expect you to sustain key elements of your project. These elements can

include strategies or services and interventions that have improved practices and outcomes.

- Provide an approach to project sustainability that is effective and feasible. Describe:
 - The key people and organizations whose support you will require.
 - The types of alternative support you will require to maintain the project.
 - If the proposed project involves key project partners, describe how you will maintain their cooperation or collaboration after the federal funding ends.

Protection of sensitive or confidential information

Describe how you will collect and safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other information that is considered sensitive. Make sure your approach is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality. Provide:

- The methods and systems you will use to make sure that you properly handle confidential and sensitive information, including information from any subrecipients or contractors.
- A plan for the disposition of such information at the end of the period of performance.

For more information, see [2 CFR 200.303\(e\)](#).

Dissemination plan

Propose a plan to disseminate reports, products, and project outputs to key target audiences. Include:

- Dissemination goals and objectives.
- Strategies to identify and engage with target audiences.
- How you will allocate enough staff time and budget for dissemination.
- A preliminary plan to evaluate whether target audiences receive project information and use it as intended.
- The dissemination timeline.

Line-item budget and budget narrative

The line-item budget and budget justification support the information you provide in the Budget Information Standard Form (SF) SF-424A.

HHS now uses the definitions for [equipment](#) and [supplies](#) in [2 CFR 200.1](#). The new definitions change the threshold for equipment to the lesser of the recipient's capitalization level or \$10,000 and the threshold for supplies to below that amount.

Justify the costs you ask for and provide detail, including calculations for the “object class categories” in the Budget Information Standard Form. You will provide this information for each year of the period of performance. See information on [funding periods](#).

Note: The maximum award ceiling for year 1 is \$3, 333, 333. The maximum award amount ceiling for years 2, 3, 4, and 5 will increase to \$4,000, 000, per year.

As you develop your budget, consider:

- If the costs are necessary, reasonable, allocable, and consistent with your project’s purpose and activities.
- How you calculate your costs in ways that are clear and repeatable.
- The restrictions on spending funds. See the [funding policies and limitations](#).

Please also review the Standard Form instructions.

To create your line-item budget and justification, see [detailed budget instructions on our website](#).

In general, you must:

- Indicate the method you will use for your indirect cost rate. See the [indirect costs](#) section for further information.
- Include estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail necessary for the calculation to be duplicated.
- For any cost sharing, include a detailed listing of any funding sources identified in Block 18 of the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance.
- Provide a clear and detailed line-item budget and budget narrative for each year of the five-year project period aligned with proposed activities.
- Include the percentage of funds allocated for technology and provide justification for those costs.
- For applicants planning to use subawards, if your subaward budget is more than 50% of total direct costs, justify why you are subawarding that portion of the project. Explain:
 - How you plan to maintain a substantive role in the project.
 - Why you cannot achieve your goals without the subrecipients’ participation.

You must ensure that the proposed budget is clearly aligned with the TE-ARM Innovation Hub model and supports implementation of all core program activities.

The budget narrative should demonstrate how resources will support implementation within pilot jurisdictions, execution of program activities, performance measurement and CQI, and regional coordination.

You should provide a clear rationale for how funds are distributed and demonstrate that the level of investment is appropriate to the number, size, and complexity of proposed pilot jurisdictions and activities.

Proprietary or personally identifiable information

Clearly identify any salary or other proprietary information or personally identifiable information within your application. Identification will ensure this information is not shared with reviewers. Note on page 1 of the attachments file (file two) where the information to be redacted is located.

If you have an [exemption for a paper submission](#), you can protect salary information and any proprietary information by placing that information only in the original application. You can remove the information from the copies, keeping summary information.

File two: Attachments

To submit file two, you will use the Other Attachments form found in the Grants.gov application package for this NOFO.

This file includes all attachments.

ACF Priorities Alignment Attestation

Not included in the page limit. This should be submitted with the application or before award.

You must self-certify that you will align with the ACF priorities that are relevant to this funding opportunity, as identified in both the Program description and Step 4, under Merit review process, Scoring criteria, Alignment with ACF Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles, elements 2 and 3. You must provide the following on your organization's letterhead.

I hereby attest and certify that:

_____ (Applicant Name) affirms its commitment to supporting and advancing ACF's published Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), consistent with applicable federal statutes, regulations, and Administration priorities.

Insert Date of Signature:

Print Name and Title of the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR):

Signature of AOR:

Indirect cost agreement

If you include indirect costs in your budget using an approved rate, include a copy of your current agreement approved by your [cognizant agency for indirect costs](#). If you use the *de minimis* rate, you do not need to submit this attachment.

See the [indirect costs](#) section for more information.

Legal proof of nonprofit status

If your organization is a nonprofit, you need to attach proof. We will accept any of the following:

- A reference to your listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations.
- A copy of a current tax exemption certificate from the IRS.
- A letter from your state's tax department, attorney general, or another appropriate state official saying that your group is a nonprofit and that none of your net earnings go to private shareholders or others.
- A certified copy of your certificate of incorporation or similar document. This document must show that your group is a nonprofit.
- Any of these documents for a parent organization. Also include a statement signed by an official of the parent group that your organization is a nonprofit affiliate.

Legal proof of for-profit status

If your organization is a for-profit, including a small business, you need to attach proof.

Include documentation establishing your organization's power to enter into contractual relationships or accept awards. This might include your articles of incorporation or bylaws.

Legal proof of small businesses

In addition to the proof that your organization is for-profit required in the previous section, small businesses must submit a certification signed by the chief executive officer or designee that states that the entity qualifies as a small business under [13 CFR 121.101-121.201](#).

Organizational capacity supporting information

You must attach the following information to support your organizational capacity information in your [resources and capabilities](#) section:

- Organizational charts, including all partners.
- Resumes, biographical sketches, or curricula vitae for all key personnel.
- Job descriptions for each vacant key position.

- Documentation demonstrating existing or proposed partnerships with pilot jurisdictions and key implementation partners (if not already included in letter of commitment).
- Documentation demonstrating organizational capacity of the committed pilot site (if not already included in the letter of commitment).

Third-party agreements

You must submit agreements with all third parties involved in the project. Third parties include subrecipients, contractors, and other cooperating entities. Third-party agreements include letters of commitment, memoranda of understanding, and memoranda of agreement. We do not consider general letters of support to be third-party agreements.

Any such agreement must:

- Describe each party's roles and responsibilities for project activities.
- Describe the support and resources that the third party is committing to the proposed project.
- Be signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make such commitments.
- Detail work schedules and estimated compensation with an understanding that the parties will negotiate a final agreement after award.

Attach statements from community, public, or commercial leaders that support your project. At minimum, each letter of support must identify the person writing the letter, the organization they represent, the date, and their reasons for supporting the project.

Maintenance of effort certification

Not included in the page limit.

You will self-certify your maintenance of effort. Place this certification on your organization's letterhead. See the [maintenance of effort wording at ACF's website](#).

Protection of human subjects certification

Not included in the page limit.

You must attach a Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance Identification / Certification / Declaration of Exemption form. You can find this form at the [Office of Human Research Protections Forms](#) website.

For more on this topic see [the Office of Human Research Protections](#) website. If you have questions, you can email them at OHRP@HHS.gov or call them at 240-453-6900.

Letters of commitment

Applicants must include a letter of commitment from at least one pilot jurisdiction within the proposed service region. Pilot jurisdictions must be public child welfare agencies that administer Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs at the state, territorial, Tribal, or local level.

Standard forms

You will need to complete some other required standard forms other than those in files one and two. You can find them in the NOFO [application package](#) or review them and their instructions at [Grants.gov Forms](#).

Forms	Submission requirement
Project Abstract Summary	With the application.
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	With the application.
Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	With the application.
Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	With the application.
Key Contacts	With the application.
Grants.gov Lobbying Form	With the application or before award.
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	If applicable based on instructions, with the application or before award.
Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	With the application. Cite your primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.

Important: Public information

When filling out your SF-424 form, pay attention to Box 15: Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project.

We share what you put there with [USAspending](#). This is where the public goes to learn how the federal government spends taxpayer money.

Instead of just a title, insert a short description of your project and what it will do.

[See instructions and examples \[PDF\]](#).



Step 4:

Learn About Review and Award

In this step

Application review	<u>48</u>
Award notices	<u>55</u>

Application review

Initial review

We will review your application to make sure that it meets the responsiveness requirements listed in the [disqualification factors section](#). If your application does not meet these criteria, we will disqualify it and we will not move it to the merit review (scoring) phase.

We will let you know if your application is disqualified within 30 days of the application deadline. You won't receive any notice from ACF if your application failed Grants.gov validation checks.

If you submit more than two files in addition to your forms, we will remove the extra files. We will let you know if this happens.

We will also remove blurred or illegible pages and any file formats that are not supported.

We will not review any pages that exceed the page limit.

If your application fails to adhere to ACF's NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements, we will adjust your application by removing page(s) from the application. We will remove the pages before the merit review and will not send them to reviewers.

If we do so, we will send you a letter after we make awards to notify you that we amended your application.

Merit review process

A panel reviews all applications that pass the initial review. The panel members use the criteria shown in each section of the project narrative and in the line-item budget and budget narrative section.

Our reviewers typically are not federal employees. See the section on [proprietary and personally identifiable information](#).

Criteria summary

Criterion	Total number of points = 110
1. Objective and need	5 Points
2. Approach	35 Points
3. Evaluation and continuous quality improvement	15 points
4. Organizational capacity and partnerships	30 points
5. Budget	15 points
6. ACF Priority Alignment	10 points

Scoring criteria

1. Objective and need

Maximum points: 5

The reviewer will assess how well you:

1.1 Clearly define project objectives that are specific, measurable, and aligned with TE-ARM program goals.

1.2 Demonstrate a strong understanding of challenges in adoptive family recruitment and matching, including system, practice, and data-related barriers supported by relevant data from the proposed service area.

1.3 Identify the target populations of children and youth and the specific challenges associated with recruiting and matching families for those populations within the proposed service area.

2. Approach

Maximum points: 35

The reviewer will assess how well you propose a feasible, detailed, and integrated approach to implementing technology-enhanced recruitment and matching:

2.1 Describe how you will effectively address partner readiness and pilot requirements for at least one committed pilot jurisdiction within the proposed region.

2.2 Demonstrate a feasible plan to secure at least one additional pilot jurisdiction within the first 6 months of the project period.

2.3 Describe how pilot jurisdictions were selected and how their needs align with the proposed project.

2.4 Provide a clear and feasible plan for implementing activities across pilot jurisdictions, including coordination, roles, and timelines.

2.5 Present a clear and coherent logic model that aligns with the proposed approach, including inputs, key activities, outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes.

2.6 Describe how human-centered design will be applied, including how caseworkers, families, or other stakeholders will be engaged in design, testing and/or refinement.

2.7 Describe how technology will support and enhance, rather than replace, professional judgment.

2.8 Describe a clear plan for training, coaching, and technical assistance to support pilot jurisdictions.

2.9 Describe how implementation and outcomes will be monitored, supported, and refined over time, including how data and feedback will be used to assess progress against the logic model and inform continuous improvement.

2.10 Clearly distinguish between intensive technical assistance support for pilot jurisdictions and broader support and dissemination activities for non-pilot jurisdictions.

2.11 Describe the approach to data integration, interoperability, and alignment with existing systems (e.g., SACWIS/CCWIS or comparable systems).

2.12 Describe how privacy, security, and responsible data use will be addressed including compliance with applicable standards.

2.13 Identify key risks and challenges and describe specific strategies to mitigate those risks.

3. Evaluation and continuous quality improvement

Maximum points: 15

The reviewer will assess how well you propose a practical and feasible project performance evaluation approach:

3.1 Describe how performance measures (process, outcome, and system-level) will be tracked and reported.

3.2 Describe how data will be used to inform CQI and guide iterative refinement of tools and implementation strategies.

3.3 Describe how data will be collected, managed, and maintained to ensure accuracy, quality, and timely reporting.

3.4 Describe how project performance evaluation activities will assess tool effectiveness and implementation across pilot jurisdictions, including differences in outcomes across sites.

3.5 Describe how evaluation findings will inform scaling, replication, and broader dissemination of project approaches.

3.6 Demonstrate that the evaluation approach is aligned with the project scope, resources and timeline.

4. Organizational capacity and partnerships

Maximum points: 30

The reviewer will assess how well you demonstrate the capacity to implement a complex, multi-site project:

4.1 Demonstrate integration of both technology expertise and child welfare practice expertise within the project team.

4.2 Provide evidence of experience developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating projects of similar size and scope.

4.3 Demonstrate experience working with child welfare data systems and integrating technology or data tools into practice.

4.4 Describe experience translating data and technology tools into usable solutions within child welfare workflows and decision-making processes.

4.5 Describe partnerships with pilot jurisdictions and other implementation partners—including, but not limited to, community-based and faith-based organizations – providing the nature of collaboration, roles in implementation, and how partners will contribute to project activities.

4.6 Provide letters of commitment that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and level of engagement.

4.7 Describe a clear governance and management structure for coordinating across partners and managing subrecipients.

4.8 Demonstrate the ability to support multiple jurisdictions simultaneously by describing how staffing, resource allocation and technical assistance will be structured to meet the unique needs of each pilot jurisdiction.

5. Budget

Maximum points: 15

The reviewer will assess how well you:

5.1 Provide a clear and detailed line-item budget and budget narrative for each year of the five-year project period aligned with proposed activities.

5.2 Clearly describe how funds will be allocated across major components, including technology development, pilot implementation, training and technical assistance, and evaluation.

5.3 Demonstrate that the proposed budget allocates appropriate and clearly justified resources to support pilot jurisdiction implementation.

5.4 Describe the organization's capacity and experience in managing federal funds, including systems for financial oversight and compliance.

5.5 Clearly provide the percentage of funds allocated for technology and provide justification for those costs.

We do not consider voluntary cost sharing during merit review.

6. ACF Priority Alignment

Maximum points: 10

ACF's published Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles inform programmatic and administrative expectations under this funding opportunity.

Applicants must demonstrate alignment by describing how the proposed project advances relevant ACF priorities through program design and evaluation. Applicants should clearly identify which ACF priorities are relevant and explain how those priorities are reflected in the proposed approach. Applicants are encouraged to provide examples of prior experiences that can show alignment efforts that have already been achieved. Examples should describe strategies used, measurable results (if available), and lessons learned.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to organize their response using the three criteria below.

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the application demonstrates clear, specific, and measurable connections between ACF priorities and the proposed project. Scores will reflect the strength, clarity, and specificity of those connections.

Scoring considerations for the next three criteria:

- **High-scoring applications** will demonstrate clear understanding, intentional integration, and measurable alignment with ACF priorities across all three criteria.
- **Moderate-scoring applications** may reference ACF priorities but provide limited specificity, uneven integration, or minimal connection to measurable outcomes.
- **Low-scoring applications** will show minimal or unclear understanding of ACF priorities and lack meaningful connection to program design or performance.

6.1 Demonstrated review and understanding (up to 2 points)

The extent to which you demonstrate that it has reviewed ACF's Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles and explains their relevance to the proposed project.

Reviewers will look for:

- Identification of specific ACF priorities (not general or vague references).
- A clear explanation of how those priorities relate to the proposed project.

6.2 Operationalization in program design and implementation (up to 3 points)

The degree to which the following one or more ACF priorities are translated into specific elements of the proposed project:

- Gold-standard research.

Reviewers will assess if you:

- Connect identified ACF priorities to program design, service delivery, and implementation.
- Demonstrate how priorities influence partnerships, staffing, or key program decisions.
- Provide clear, actionable examples of how alignment will be carried out in practice.

6.3 Integration into performance and continuous improvement (up to 5 points)

The extent to which the following one or more ACF priorities are reflected in measurable outcomes and ongoing program improvement:

- Gold-standard research.

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the application:

- Aligns performance measures and expected outcomes with identified priorities.
- Includes evaluation methods or performance indicators that reflect those priorities.
- Describes how data will be used for continuous quality improvement.

Risk review

Before making an award, we review the risk that you will mismanage federal funds or fail to complete the project objectives. We need to make sure you've handled any past federal awards well and demonstrated sound business practices.

We use [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) Responsibility/Qualification and Exclusions to check this history for all awards likely to be over \$250,000.

If we find a significant risk, we may choose not to fund your application or to place specific conditions on the award.

For more details, see [2 CFR 200.206](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-200/subpart-206).

Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review and scoring results, including the ten points for Alignment with ACF Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles to the extent permitted by law. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.

- Organizations serving emerging, unserved, or underserved populations.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects by considering geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant.
- The application's compliance with this NOFO's prohibition on using funds awarded under this NOFO to support [DEI and DEIA activities](#).
- Funding Preference for Alignment with Agency Priorities. Before final funding decisions are made, division leadership will review awards for consistency with applicable laws and alignment with Agency Priorities.

We may:

- Fund applications in whole or in part.
- Fund applications at a lower amount than requested.
- Decide not to allow a prime recipient to subaward if they may not be able to monitor and manage subrecipients properly.
- Decide not to fund a project with high start-up costs or unreasonably high operating costs.
- Choose not to fund applicants with management or financial problems.
- Designate your application as "approved but unfunded" if it was successful but there was not sufficient funding to make an award. You may receive funding if additional funds become available within the fiscal year.
- Choose to fund no applications under this NOFO.

We will not fund:

- A [disqualified application](#).
- An incomplete application.

Award notices

If you are successful, we will email or transmit through our grant systems a Notice of Award (NoA) to your authorized official. We will email you if your application is disqualified or unsuccessful.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you about the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you have not received an award. Project costs that you incur before you receive a NoA are at your risk.

By drawing down funds, you accept the terms and conditions of the award. The award incorporates the requirements of the program and funding authorities, the grant regulations, the GPS, and the NOFO.

If you want to know more about NoA contents, go to [Notice of Award at ACF's website](#).



Step 5:

Submit Your Application

In this step

Application submission and deadlines

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Application submission and deadlines

Application

Deadline

Due on Friday, August 21, 2026.

- For electronic submissions, the due time is 11:59 p.m. ET.
- If you receive an exemption from electronic submission, the due time is 4:30 p.m. ET. See the section on [exemptions for paper submissions](#).

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept only the last on-time submission.

The grants management officer may extend an application due date based on emergency situations such as documented natural disasters or a verifiable widespread disruption of electric or mail service.

Grants.gov submission

You must submit your application through Grants.gov unless we give you an exemption for a paper submission. See information on [getting registered](#).

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see the [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files. We encourage you to leave yourself plenty of time to upload documents.

See [Contacts and Support](#) if you need help.

Issues with federal systems

If you experience a systems issue with Grants.gov or SAM.gov, please refer to [ACF's Policy for Applicants Experiencing Federal Systems Issues \[PDF\]](#).

Exemptions for paper submissions

We need to give you an exemption before you can apply on paper. See the [ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission \[PDF\]](#).

Once we have approved your exemption, download your forms package under the Package tab in Grants.gov.

To submit your application, mail it to:

Children's Bureau Operations Center

c/o LCG, Inc.

6000 Executive Blvd., Suite 410

Rockville, MD 20852

Follow these requirements when you submit your paper application:

- Print your application and all copies one-sided.
- Submit one original and two copies of the complete application, including all required forms.
- Submit both the original and additional copies in a single package. If you plan to submit more than one application under this NOFO or others, you must submit them separately. Clearly label each package with the NOFO title and funding opportunity number.
- Your authorized organization official must sign the application. The original application must include an original signature.

Intergovernmental review

[Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#) does not apply to this NOFO. You do not need to take any action.



Step 6:

Learn What Happens After Award

In this step

Post-award requirements and administration [60](#)

Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

There are important rules you'll need to follow if you get an award. You must follow:

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award, including the [ACF Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and, if applicable, any program-specific terms and conditions. We incorporate this NOFO by reference.
- The rules listed in [2 CFR 200](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, effective October 1, 2025. These replace those in 45 CFR 75, with some exceptions in [2 CFR 300](#).
- The HHS [Grants Policy Statement \(GPS\)](#). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#), Appendix D: HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements and the [ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#).
- [45 CFR Part 87 Appendix B, Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations](#). This appendix explains the obligations of and protections for faith-based organizations applying for grants.
- Applicable program statute and regulations at 42 U.S.C. 5113.

Reporting

As a recipient, you will have to submit performance and financial reports. To learn more about reporting, see [Reporting at the ACF website](#).

- Performance report form: **ACF-OGM-PPR**
 - Performance report frequency: Semiannually
- Financial report form: **SF-425 FFR**
 - Financial report frequency: Semiannually



Contacts and Support

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Agency contacts

Program

Surina Amin

cb@grantreview.org

888-203-6161

Grants management

Sarah Viola

cb@grantreview.org

888-203-6161

Help with systems

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. Hold on to your ticket number.

- Phone: 1-800-518-4726.
- Email: support@grants.gov.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can:

- Call 866-606-8220.
- Live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

Reference websites

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)
- [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#)
- [Grants.gov](#)
- [Applying for an ACF Grant Award](#)
- [Grants.gov Accessibility Information](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\)](#)
- [United States Code \(U.S.C.\)](#)
- [Award Terms and Conditions](#) (see also the [ACF Standard Terms and Conditions \[PDF\]](#))
- [ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#)
- [ACF Property Guidance](#)

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 (project narrative, line-item budget, and justification) is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection information.

The project description information collection is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires April 30, 2029. 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.

Modifications

Modification Description	Updated Date