

Notice of Funding Opportunity  
**Application due March 16, 2026**

ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

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

# Support for National Electronic Interstate Records Exchange System

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CO-0079



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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 March 16, 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

## In this step

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# Basic information

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families

Children's Bureau

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Help expand and implement a secure electronic records exchange system for states providing children with foster care, adoption, and residential placement services

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## Summary

The purpose of this NOFO is to help expand and implement a secure, multi-tenant electronic records exchange system. The system must meet states' varied data sharing and privacy needs so they can provide children with orderly and timely foster care, adoption, and residential placement services across state lines. This includes successfully onboarding remaining jurisdictions to the system and continuously providing the security and electronic upgrades necessary for a state-of-the-art national data exchange.

## Funding details

**Type:** Cooperative agreement

**Expected total program funding:** \$1,600,000

**Total expected awards:** 1

**Minimum award amount for the first budget period (award floor):** \$1,450,000

**Maximum award amount for the first budget period (award ceiling):** \$1,600,000

We plan to fund a 5-year project period. Each project period has 5 one-year budget periods.

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



Have questions?

See [Contacts and Support](#).

## Key facts

**Opportunity name:**  
Support for National Electronic Interstate Records Exchange System

**Opportunity number:**  
HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CO-0079

**Federal assistance listing:**  
93.652

**NOFO version:** Original

## Key dates

**Application submission deadline:** March 16, 2026

**Optional notice of intent deadline:**  
February 16, 2026

**Expected project start date:** September 30, 2026

See [intergovernmental review](#) for other submission processes that may apply to this NOFO.

# Eligibility

## Eligible applicants

Eligibility is open to public or private agencies or organizations.

## Other eligibility criteria

Individuals, sole proprietorships, 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.

## 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, 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.

## 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

[42 U.S.C. 5113\(b\)\(3\)](#)

# Program description

## Background

The [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children \(ICPC\)](#) governs foster care and adoption placements across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It establishes uniform legal and administrative procedures for states to provide children with foster care, adoption, and residential placement across state lines (also known as interstate placement). States explore ICPC placements across jurisdictions for an estimated nearly 100,000 children each year.

The National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) was developed with funding from the Children's Bureau (CB) to alleviate the need for paper-based processes. Paper-based processes were formerly used to share and exchange case files and information between jurisdictions and to collect, track, synthesize, and report comprehensive data about the system. Launched as a pilot project with six states in 2013, the NEICE significantly reduced the time it takes to place children across state lines and saved participating states thousands of dollars in mailing and copying costs.

After the pilot project, CB provided funding to expand the NEICE to all 52 jurisdictions of the ICPC. Currently, 50 jurisdictions are members of the NEICE and the remaining two must join the system by 2027. Per legislative directive in the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2017, all states must be connected to an electronic interstate case processing system by October 1, 2027. To facilitate that process, the purpose of this funding opportunity is to help expand and implement a secure, multi-tenant electronic records exchange system (the NEICE or the system) that meets states' varied data sharing and privacy needs so they can provide children with orderly and timely interstate placement services.

# Project requirements

## Goal

The goal of this NOFO is to help expand and implement the NEICE system and continuously provide the security and electronic upgrades necessary for a state-of-the-art national data exchange to support the safe and timely placement of children and youth across jurisdictional boundaries.

## Program objectives

To meet its goal, this project will:

- Further develop and operate the current NEICE.
- Maintain a strong relationship with the [Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children \(AAICPC\)](#).
- Provide support to onboard the remaining jurisdictions of the AAICPC to the NEICE.
- Provide system upgrades to assure the NEICE is efficient and effective.
- Coordinate ongoing support for AAICPC jurisdictions to make sure the NEICE is sustainable.

Continued support for the NEICE will focus on the following program objectives.

## Onboard remaining jurisdictions

This project will help jurisdictions complete the four key steps to join the NEICE:

- **State decision making:** Provide information and demonstrations on joining the NEICE to support state decision-making.
- **Memorandum of understanding (MOU) process:** Share a MOU with state counsel, security officers, ICPC program, and IT staff to facilitate the MOU process. States must pay a one-time technical connection fee in addition to an annual license fee for the next step of onboarding.
- **Onboarding support:** Provide technical materials, technical assistance, a help desk, eLearning opportunities, and training to help states onboard to the system.
- **Ongoing support:** Develop product improvements, scan for security infiltrations, install updates, lead user group discussions, analyze and share data, and provide ongoing help desk support, eLearning, and training to states.

## Maintain and refine the electronic exchange system

To support the safety and well-being of children engaged in the ICPC, this project must make sure that ICPC jurisdictions use optimal electronic methods to quickly and securely exchange documentation between state systems. This documentation

includes home studies, supervision reports, and the child's safety and well-being reports to ensure children's needs are being met. The system must:

- Be a highly secure, multi-tenant system that meets [National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\) requirements](#) and [Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program \(FedRAMP\) standards](#).
- Adhere to federal regulations and guidance provided in the [Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System \(CCWIS\) Overview for State and Tribal IT Staff \[PDF\]](#), CCWIS regulations at [45 CFR 1355.52-59](#), and guidance available at [Federal Guidance for Child Welfare IT Systems](#) and [Federal Guidance for Child Welfare IT Systems](#).
- Meet states' wide-ranging technology needs and adjust to increased expectations to simplify data processing tasks for workers.
- Provide the means to maintain the publicly owned National Information Exchange Model (NIEM)-compliant Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) for all 52 AAICPC jurisdictions to send and receive all the information necessary to support placing a child out of state.
- Provide nationally consistent, real-time information on where children are in the process and how long it takes to complete their interstate journey.
- Propose a thorough plan to assure that ongoing cybersecurity needs are met, including a regular timeframe to conduct breach drills.

## Improve administrative efficiency

This project will maintain and improve efficiency for all 52 AAICPC jurisdictions by simplifying the ICPC administrative process, including the following:

- Provide a consistent and comprehensive way to collect and monitor aggregated ICPC cases, across all participating states and jurisdictions.
- Simplify case processing and data analysis nationally.
- Use data to support the AAICPC in analyzing policies and processes and identify areas for improvements.
- Reduce administrative costs and staff time.
- Minimize duplicative data entry as much as possible.
- Propose additional exchanges to support effective administration of state and tribal child welfare programs.

## Reduce barriers to access and improve timely permanency

This project will reduce barriers to accessing services for children waiting for interstate placements and improve the likelihood that children will receive timely and permanent foster care, adoption, or residential placement. This objective includes the following components:

- Track documents, decisions, and placements to increase accountability and make sure that the procedures for establishing the safety, well-being, and stability of the placement are followed in both jurisdictions in a timely manner.
- Help states comply and conform with ICPC regulations and make sure that interstate communications about the child's needs happen quickly.
- Use tracking mechanisms to provide timeframe alerts and monitoring to make sure that plans for a specific child progress, and to evaluate and address systemic issues.

## Support interoperability

The system will support interoperability with other human service functions and systems to make sure that services are provided to eligible individuals, services aren't duplicated, and fraud and system abuse are reduced. The system's interoperability includes the following systems:

- [CCWIS \[PDF\]](#).
- Child Abuse and Neglect Registry.
- Medicaid.
- Social programs addressing human trafficking, homelessness, and juvenile justice.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Other systems to consider for interoperability are court systems, educational systems, child support, and missing and exploited children.

## Align with ACF's promotion of system interoperability and security standards

To directly exchange data with other state data systems, the NEICE must comply with the same standards as the state systems. These standards include the:

- NIEM model.
- [National Human Services Interoperability Architecture](#).
- CCWIS standards.

## Cooperative agreement—Description of ACF's involvement

A cooperative agreement is a specific method of awarding federal assistance where you can expect substantial federal involvement. A cooperative agreement clearly defines the respective responsibilities of CB and you, as the recipient. We expect that the

agency's involvement will produce program benefits that would not otherwise be available.

For this project, our involvement and collaboration will include the following:

- Reviewing and approving planning stages of the activities before they're implemented.
- Coordinating key program activities, including strategic planning, implementation, information technology enhancements, training and technical assistance, development of publications or products, and evaluation.
- Closely monitoring the project beyond what's typical for awards, to ensure your project matches the intent and scope of this funding.

## 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.
- 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 based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or other protected traits.
  - Any efforts that promote a "discriminatory equity ideology" as defined in [Executive Order 14190](#), Section 2(b).

- 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

## In this step

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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.

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

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# Application checklist

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

## File one

Use the Project Narrative Attachment form.

Component	Included in page limit?
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Table of contents</a>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Project summary</a>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Project narrative</a>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Line-item budget and budget narrative</a>	Yes

## File two

Insert each in a single Other Attachments form.

Component	Included in page limit?
<input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cost agreement	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal proof of nonprofit status	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal proof of for-profit status	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal proof of small businesses	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational capacity supporting information (including organization chart)	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Third-party agreements	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of effort certification	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of human subjects certification	No

## Standard forms

Use each required form in Grants.gov.

Component	Included in page limit?
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Abstract Summary	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Key Contacts	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Grants.gov Lobbying Form	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	No
<input type="checkbox"/> 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: 90 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

### 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.

## 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.

Demonstrate the ability and process to maintain and manage strong partnerships with public child welfare agencies to support the continued optimal operation of the system. Describe how you will maintain a strong relationship with the AAICPC.

Respond to all of the objectives discussed in the [project requirements section](#). Describe in detail how you'll carry out each of the program objectives:

- Onboard remaining jurisdictions to the NEICE.
- Maintain and refine the electronic exchange system.
- Improve administrative efficiency.
- Reduce barriers to access and improve timely permanency.
- Support interoperability.
- Align with ACF's promotion of system interoperability and security standards.
- Meet NIST requirements and FedRAMP standards, including a plan for adherence to federal regulations and guidance provided in the [CCWIS Overview for State and Tribal IT Staff \[PDF\]](#), regulations at 45 CFR 1355.52-59, and the Federal Guidance for Child Welfare IT Systems.

### 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.

## **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.

### **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) 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 your organization's experience working with child welfare services, ICPC, secure data exchange systems, or other directly relevant expertise.
- Discuss roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed key staff position.
- Demonstrate that your organization and your partners, if relevant, understand the purpose and requirements of NEICE.

- 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\(e\)](#).

## **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-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](#).

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.
- 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.

## 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

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.

## 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 the information in your [organizational capacity](#) section:

- Organizational charts, including all partners.
- Resumes, biographical sketches, or curricula vitae for all key personnel.
- Job descriptions for each vacant key position.
- Copy or description of your organization's fiscal control and accountability procedures.

## 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.
- Identify the primary applicant and all collaborators responsible for project activities if the agreement is for a collaboration or consortia application.
- If the agreement covers a loan transaction, include:
  - The purposes for the loan.
  - Interest rates and other fees.
  - Terms of the loan.
  - Repayment schedules.
  - Collateral security.
  - Default and collection procedures.
  - The signatures of the authorized officials of the lender and the borrower.
- If the agreement covers an equity investment, include the:
  - Purposes of the equity investment.
  - Type of equity transaction, for example a stock purchase.
  - Cost per share and basis on which the cost per share is derived.
  - Number of shares being purchased.
  - Percentage of ownership in the business.
  - Term of duration of the agreement.
  - Number of seats on the board, if applicable.
  - Signatures of the authorized officials of the applicant and third-party organization.

## **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](mailto:OHRP@HHS.gov) or call them at 240-453-6900.

## 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

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# 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 = 100
1. Approach	40 points
2. Evaluation	15 points
3. Organizational capacity	35 points
4. Budget	10 points

## Scoring criteria

### Approach

#### Maximum points: 40

The reviewer will assess how well you:

- 1.1 Provide a workable plan of action that:
  - a. Relates to the project objectives and scope of the project.
  - b. Reflects the intent and an understanding of the project's priorities to improve administrative efficiency, service delivery, and interoperability with other human services functions and systems.
- 1.2 Describe how you will maintain and support the publicly owned NIEM-compliant IEPD for all 52 AAICPC jurisdictions to send and receive between states automatically all the information necessary to support placing a child out-of-state from each jurisdiction's child welfare information system, under the ICPC protocols.
- 1.3 Describe a system that will meet national government security standards, including NIST and FedRAMP, federal regulations, and guidance for state and tribal child welfare IT systems.
- 1.4 Propose a system that will continue to minimize, as much as possible, duplicate data entry by all participant workers in their child welfare information systems and in the NEICE.
- 1.5 Describe how the system will support the ICPC processes and coordination between ICPC activities and other child welfare tasks of the 52 AAICPC jurisdictions. Any modification of states' processes that need to be made has been adequately planned for and integrated into the design of the project.
- 1.6 Detail a reasonable timeline for implementing the proposed project that includes the planned activities, in chronological order, and shows a reasonable

schedule of accomplishments, target dates, and the factors that may accelerate or decelerate the work.

- 1.7 Provide a well-defined logic model that demonstrates strong links between proposed inputs and activities and intended short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, and guides the proposed project.
- 1.8 Provide a strong approach for the ongoing management of the system, including upgrades and assuring ongoing cybersecurity needs are met.
- 1.9 Demonstrate the ability and process to maintain and manage strong partnerships with public child welfare agencies to support the continued optimal operation of the system.
- 1.10 Describe your ability to provide for interoperability with other human service systems. At a minimum, these should include the CAN registry, state CCWIS, and access to Medicaid eligibility information for youth that have aged out of the child welfare system.
- 1.11 Detail a reasonable and convincing sustainability plan after the period of federal funding ends.
- 1.12 Propose a sound plan for negotiating new or continuing existing data-sharing agreements and for receiving and processing annual licensing fees from each of the 52 AAICPC jurisdictions.
- 1.13 Describe how you will maintain a strong relationship with the AAICPC.

## Evaluation

### Maximum points: 15

The reviewer will assess how well you:

- 2.1 Identify appropriate methods for measuring the project outcomes of interest, including how well the project:
  - a. Improves administrative efficiency and service delivery.
  - b. Reduces barriers to access for children that would benefit from an interstate placement.
- 2.2 Detail how the evaluation plan will provide insight to child welfare agencies to expedite placements, shorten the ICPC process, and improve timeframes and transparency between states, local child welfare services or child protective services agencies, contractors, and the courts.
- 2.3 Explain how the proposed project performance evaluation plan will provide regular, meaningful feedback to improve the project.

## Organizational capacity

### Maximum points: 35

The reviewer will assess how well you:

- 3.1 Demonstrate the capacity of your organization to fulfill your roles and functions, as well as the capacity of any partnering organizations, agencies, or subcontractors and their staff, to administer and implement the project effectively and efficiently.
- 3.2 Demonstrate sufficient and relevant experience and expertise in administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of similar projects.
- 3.3 Discuss the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed key project staff position, including consultants, subcontractors, and/or partnering agencies or organizations, ensuring they are clearly defined and appropriate for the successful implementation of the proposed project. Show that you've secured commitments from key partners, if applicable.
- 3.4 Demonstrate that the proposed project director and key project staff possess sufficient relevant knowledge, experience, and capabilities to implement and manage a project of this size, scope, and complexity effectively.
- 3.5 Explain a sound management 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.
- 3.6 Demonstrate a mutually beneficial relationship between the proposed project and your other work that's planned, anticipated, or underway with federal assistance.

## Budget

### Maximum points: 10

The reviewer will assess how well you:

- 4.1 Provide a line-item budget for each year of the project and a detailed narrative budget justification for the first year of the project.
- 4.2 Discuss how the costs of the proposed project are reasonable for the activities you'll conduct and the expected results and benefits.
- 4.3 Demonstrate fiscal controls and accounting procedures that ensure funds are used prudently, dispersed properly and on time, and accurately accounted for.

We do not consider voluntary cost sharing during merit review.

## 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://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](#).

## Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review and scoring results. 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](#).

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

## Optional notice of intent

Due on February 16, 2026, at 5 p.m. ET.

We ask that you let us know if you plan to apply for this opportunity. We do this to plan for the number of expert reviewers we will need to evaluate applications. You do not have to submit a notice of intent to apply.

Please email your notice to [cb@grantreview.org](mailto:cb@grantreview.org). In your email, include:

- The funding opportunity number and title.
- Your organization's name and address.
- A contact name, phone number, and email address.

## Application

### Deadline

Due on March 16, 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:

### CB Operations Center c/o LCG

ATTN: HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CO-0079

6000 Executive Boulevard, 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

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# 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 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.

## 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

## In this step

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# Agency contacts

## Program

Kara Allen-Eckard

888-203-6161

[cb@grantreview.org](mailto:cb@grantreview.org)

## Grants management

Sarah Viola

888-203-6161

[cb@grantreview.org](mailto:cb@grantreview.org)

# 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](mailto: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 March 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.

# Modifications

Modification Description	Updated Date