

Administration for Children and Families

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Center to Support Research and Evaluation Capacity of Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies

HHS-2022-ACF-OPRE-YE-0136

Application Due Date: 07/26/2022

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Funding Opportunity Title:
Center to Support Research and Evaluation Capacity of Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies

Announcement Type:
Initial

Funding Opportunity Number:
HHS-2022-ACF-OPRE-YE-0136

Primary CFDA Number:
93.575

Due Date for Applications:
07/26/2022

Executive Summary

Notice:

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

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is soliciting applications for a 5-year cooperative agreement that will fund a Center to Support Research and Evaluation Capacity of Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies (hereafter referred to as "Center"). Specifically, the Center will build research and evaluation capacity in the child care subsidy policy field by facilitating information sharing, learning, and collaboration across ACF-sponsored research partnerships funded by OPRE. The Center will be expected to organize learning communities for at least four different ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs. The Center will help to ensure that the research conducted by the sponsored research projects informs CCDF Lead Agencies and the child care and early education policy research field more broadly and will increase knowledge on child care subsidy policy topics through synthesis and analysis of research and data.

This Center will ideally bring together a team that has experience supporting CCDF Lead Agencies research and evaluation capacity building and expert level knowledge of the following: CCDF program and policies; the child care and early education research literature including the effects of early care and education on children's school readiness and parental employment; an understanding of the needs of low-income families; and the policies and practices that support equitable access to child care.

The grant recipient will be funded through a cooperative agreement. See *Section II. Federal Award Information* for a description of the substantial involvement of the Federal Project Officer (FPO) in the performance of this cooperative agreement.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority
Section 658O(a)(5) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9858m(a)(5)).

Description
A. BACKGROUND

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a multibillion-dollar federal and state partnership administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) dedicated to providing access to affordable, high-quality child care to low-income working families. As a block grant, CCDF gives funding to states, territories, and tribes to provide child care subsidies through grants and contracts with providers, as well as vouchers or certificates to low-income families. CCDF improves the quality of care to promote children's healthy development and learning by supporting child care licensing and quality improvement systems to help programs meet higher standards and by supporting child care professionals to attain more training and education.

To facilitate CCDF services, OCC establishes and oversees the implementation of child care policies and provides guidance and technical assistance to states, territories, and tribal governments as they administer CCDF programs. OCC has also taken a lead role in supporting state early childhood care and education systems to help ensure that children receive quality care in order to support their healthy development and school success and that comprehensive services are made available for families in need. OCC has created strategic partnerships with states to improve early childhood programs through a significant infusion of guidance, training, and technical assistance to promote the development of early learning guidelines, professional development plans, development and implementation of quality rating and improvement systems, and coordination across early childhood programs. To learn more about the goals and initiatives of CCDF and OCC, please visit OCC's website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/.

Since fiscal year (FY) 2000, the CCDF program has provided funding for research intended to help child care decision-makers in crafting policies and initiatives that support positive outcomes for families and children; to increase the capacity for child care research at the national, state, and local levels; and to promote linkages among research, policy, and practice. Federal law allows for up to ½ of 1 percent of total mandatory and discretionary funding in annual appropriations to be set aside for research. In FY 2021, that amount was close to 40 million dollars. To date, these funds have supported research efforts that have increased our knowledge about the efficacy of child care subsidy policies and programs in enhancing employment and economic self-sufficiency of low-income families, and in improving quality in child care and early education settings to support learning and development of children. Descriptions of current and past research projects funded with these research set-aside funds can be found at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/topic/overview/child-care.

B. GRANT PROGRAM PURPOSE

This 5-year cooperative agreement will fund a Center to build research and evaluation capacity

of CCDF Lead Agencies. Specifically, the Center will build research and evaluation capacity in the child care subsidy policy field by facilitating information sharing, learning, and collaboration across ACF-sponsored research partnerships funded by OPRE. The Center will help to ensure that the research conducted by the sponsored research projects informs CCDF Lead Agencies and the child care and early education policy research field more broadly, and will increase knowledge on child care subsidy policy topics through synthesis and analysis of research and data.

C. GRANT PROGRAM GOALS

The Center will pursue three key goals:

1. **Building Research and Evaluation Capacity among ACF-Sponsored Research Partnerships**: Strengthen capacity among child care policy research partnerships and other OPRE-sponsored research projects to conduct rigorous research and evaluations of child care and early education policies by supporting communication, shared learning and coordination across sponsored research projects.
2. **Communicating Research**: Share knowledge gained from sponsored research projects and translate insights and best practices in data, research, and evaluation through a variety of products and resources for the field.
3. **Advancing Research**: Generate knowledge for the field by synthesizing evidence and analyzing data and information.

Each of these goals should be a priority for the Center, and the recipient is expected to develop and realize a program that appropriately balances the Center's core infrastructure and administrative responsibilities with each of these three key program goals. These goals and the related responsibilities of the Center are discussed in more detail below.

1. Build Research and Evaluation Capacity among ACF-Sponsored Research Partnership

Approximately 60 percent of the Center's overall effort should be dedicated to the goal of building research capacity among the CCDF Lead Agencies and researchers who are part of ACF-sponsored research partnership projects.

The Center will be expected to organize learning communities for at least four different ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs. Through these learning communities, sponsored project teams must have the opportunity to communicate regularly to share lessons learned, develop collective expertise and resources, and identify opportunities for collaborative conceptualization and analyses. The Center must understand and be responsive to the diverse needs and interests of the sponsored projects and the goals of the different grant programs. Through the learning communities and other activities, the Center will support the sponsored research partnership teams to develop plans for and conduct rigorous policy-relevant research. The Center should also support the development and use of culturally responsive and equitable methods that are appropriate for understanding diverse populations, considering historical, contextual, and cultural factors.

The Center will be expected to use a variety of innovative and interactive approaches to

foster shared learning and communication, including planning and hosting regular meetings that bring together sponsored project teams. This includes a combination of monthly virtual and annual in-person meetings to facilitate ongoing information sharing and build capacity among partnership teams. These convenings may involve opportunities for individual projects to share insights, methods, or expertise for external experts to address topics relevant to the projects (e.g., community-engaged research methods, advanced statistical analyses, quasi-experimental designs, child care policy and practice, dissemination, and data visualization), or for working meetings to support collaboration across project teams. For new ACF-sponsored grant programs, the Center is expected to plan kick-off meetings to facilitate early discussions and planning about potential common research questions, methods, and topics of interest. The Center should also identify opportunities to foster communication and shared learning across the learning communities for the different grant programs. Sponsored project teams will support their own travel and lodging for in-person meetings.

The Center will be expected to facilitate in-depth collaboration across sponsored projects. This will include working with the sponsored project teams to develop common research questions, measures, and conceptualize and plan for analyses plans to support coordinated research and evaluation activities to examine child care and early education policies and issues across states, territories, and Tribes.

ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs are designed to support strong collaborations between CCDF Lead Agencies and researchers to investigate questions that are relevant to local, state, and national child care and early education policies and practices. For example, current sponsored research projects examine child care subsidy policies and quality improvement initiatives that are intended to support employment and self-sufficiency outcomes for parents, increase low-income families' access to high-quality child care programs, and promote positive learning and school readiness outcomes for children and support for child care providers. ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs that will be supported by the Center include (but are not limited to):

- Coordinated Evaluations of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies and Initiatives: The goal of these 10 planning grants is to support CCDF Lead Agencies and research partners in planning rigorous evaluations of policies and practices related to setting and implementing child care subsidy payment rates and/or family co-payments. The Center will be expected to support shared learning and the development of common measures, methods, and analyses intended to strengthen the measurement of key constructs and outcomes of interest and the evaluation plans of the sponsored projects. More information about this grant program and the individual projects can be found at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/coordinated-evaluations-child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-policies-and-initiatives. Pending availability of funds, these planning grants may be followed by a second competition (Phase II), under a separate NOFO, to support execution of the research and evaluation plans.
- Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grants: For over 25 years, this grant program has supported active collaborations between CCDF Lead Agencies and researchers to investigate questions of immediate relevance to local and national

child care policies and practices. The current cohort (2019-2023) of 11 partnerships are examining a variety of important child care issues, including policies and practices to prevent expulsion in early care and education, increasing the inclusion of children with disabilities, and reducing barriers to family stability. Pending availability of funds, a new cohort of approximately six grants will be funded in September 2022. More information about the grant program and the individual projects is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-policy-research-partnerships-1995-2023.

- Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research and Evaluation (Phase II/Cohort 1 and 2) grants: The primary goal of this grant program is to evaluate policies and initiatives in response to the CCDBG Act of 2014. The six grant recipients are nearing the end of their sponsored projects, and are, therefore, completing analyses, interpreting, and communicating findings. More information about these grants is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-development-block-grant-ccdbg-implementation-research-and-evaluation-grants.

2. Communicate Research

Approximately 15 percent of the Center's overall effort should be dedicated to the goal of communicating research.

The Center is expected to share knowledge and insights gained from the ACF-sponsored grant programs and sponsored research projects described above to inform decision-makers at the local, state, and national levels in crafting and implementing policies, initiatives, and practices related to the CCDF subsidy program and child care and early education more broadly. Center activities will incorporate various methods to communicate information and innovations with ACF partners and grant recipients and with the broader research and policy communities. This will include written products informed by the work of the grant recipients that address topics of interest to CCDF Lead Agencies. Further, the Center will support communication among research partnerships, federal staff, and ACF Technical Assistance Providers.

The Center is expected to develop and implement a dissemination strategy to broadly and effectively communicate findings from sponsored research projects and from activities conducted by the Center, with the objectives of (1) increasing knowledge about the efficacy of child care subsidy policies and practices, (2) promoting the use of research and data to inform policy decisions of CCDF Lead Agencies, and (3) building capacity in the field for child care research and evaluation at the state and local levels. The dissemination plan will be comprehensive and utilize diverse media, channels, and strategic partnerships best suited to connect target audiences with the research findings and resources that can inform their work. For example, the plan is expected to include traditional, social, and innovative media, such as developing accessible written, visual, and audio products; holding events, such as webinars, workshops, roundtables, or symposia; collaborating with ACF technical assistance providers; and engaging in bidirectional communication with stakeholders. It is expected that the dissemination plan will demonstrate strong links to the goals and objectives of the Center and the sponsored research programs.

This plan must also include procedures to support compliance with the standards for electronic media (section 508 of the amended Rehabilitation Act [“Section 508”]) to eliminate barriers that might interfere with the ability of individuals with disabilities to fully access web-delivered information and fully utilize web-based tools and services.

In developing a plan, applicants are encouraged to consult OPRE resources addressing dissemination of human services research, particularly the report titled, "The Value-Added Research Dissemination Framework" (available on ACF’s website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/opre-research-dissemination-project-2010-2012).

When issuing statements, press releases, publications, requests for proposal, bid solicitations, and other documents -- such as tool-kits, resource guides, websites, and presentations (hereafter “statements”) -- describing the projects or programs funded in whole or in part with HHS federal funds, the recipient must clearly state:

- the percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the program or project funded with federal money; and
- the percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program funded by non-governmental sources.

When issuing statements resulting from activities supported by HHS financial assistance, the recipient entity must include an acknowledgment of federal financial assistance using one of the following or a similar statement. If the HHS Grant or Cooperative Agreement is **NOT** funded with other non-governmental sources:

> "This [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [is/was] supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $XX with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF/HHS or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**."

3. Advance Research

Approximately 15 percent of the Center’s overall effort should be dedicated to the goal of advancing research.

The Center will generate knowledge for the field by synthesizing evidence and analyzing data and information to increase the knowledge base on topics of interest to the child care and early education policy field (i.e., ACF, CCDF Lead Agencies, and partners). The Center will be expected to:

- analyze information and common data from sponsored research projects and other relevant sources to inform the field about child care and early education policy topics; and

- synthesize research and evidence about topics of interest to sponsored projects, CCDF Lead Agencies, and child care and early education policy research community more broadly.

To support these activities, the Center will serve as the data coordinating center for the sponsored grant programs that have common measures. The data coordinating center will securely obtain, house, and, when possible, analyze common data from sponsored research projects. The Center will be expected to set up data sharing agreements, develop file sharing protocols, create a merged data set with the common measures and/or constructs that includes data from all relevant sponsored research projects, and develop a corresponding codebook. Depending on the grant program, merged data will be available for grant recipients and/or the Center to conduct analyses.

D. STRUCTURE AND STAFF EXPECTATIONS

The Center's leadership, staff (e.g., project managers, coordinators, writers, subcontracted research and logistics support, research partners), and partners are critical to the success of all the Center's activities. To facilitate the goals of the Center, the organizational structure should include the following key elements: the Center Director (or co-Directors); the Center's staff and partners, a Steering Committee, and, if needed, ad hoc Technical Working Groups. Each of these elements are described below.

Center Director: The Director will be the primary personnel representing the Center across all activities. The Director's expertise, knowledge, and skills will inform all of the Center's activities and will contribute directly to the collaborative efforts involved. The Director will not only be primarily responsible for the successful completion of the Center's activities, but will also be responsible for establishing and maintaining coherence in goals and objectives across the Center's activities and collaboration across the various structural elements and participants in the Center's activities.

The Director must have a MA or Ph.D. or equivalent for their field and should be an established expert as demonstrated by a history of working with CCDF Lead Agencies and published work, including rigorous research and evaluation, related to CCDF policies and programs as well as the broader child care and early education field. The Director must also have a demonstrated history supporting research and evaluation capacity building with state agencies. Gaps in the Director's skills should be addressed through additional Center leadership and staff, subcontracts with other institutions and organizations, and partnerships with other scholars and professionals (i.e., Co-Directors, consultants, logistic management support, research and/or capacity building team members).

The Director must commit appropriate time and effort to the Center to ensure ongoing management and oversight and high-quality results and products. The Center should inform the FPO about any significant changes in availability throughout the project period. Changing the Center's Director during the project period would constitute a major revision of

the approved project and would require prior approval by ACF.

Center Staff and Partners: This Center is expected to bring together a team that has experience supporting research and evaluation capacity building and collaborating with CCDF Lead Agencies. The Center is encouraged to seek out and partner with other organizations and relevant experts throughout the course of funding, given the depth of expertise that is required by this project. Center staff should have experience and expertise working with state, territory, and tribal Lead Agency staff to support agencies research and evaluation goals. To support CCDF Lead Agencies research and evaluation capacity, staff must have knowledge, expertise, and the capability to use technology to support ongoing communication, knowledge gathering, and knowledge sharing. The Center staff must have expert-level knowledge, in-depth experience, and demonstrated competence in the following:

- Research and evaluation capacity building with state agencies.
- Facilitating active learning communities that include state agency staff and researchers.
- CCDF program and policies.
- The broader child care and early education research literature, including the effects of child care and early care and education on children's school readiness and parental employment.
- An understanding of the needs of low-income families as well as experience and expertise conducting research and evaluations with low-income families using multiple methods (e.g., survey research, quasi-experimental, etc.).
- Innovative methodological approaches (e.g., rapid cycle evaluation, regression discontinuity, interrupted time series design, geomapping).
- Working with administrative data, including linking different types of administrative data (e.g., child care subsidy data, Head Start and public pre-K data, licensing and monitoring data, unemployment insurance data, K-12 education data, etc.).
- Culturally responsive and equitable research and evaluation methods.
- Writing research-based, policy-relevant products in plain language for diverse audiences especially child care and early education policy makers and funders.
- The plain language guidelines and best practices in data visualization.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee will be a critical partner in achieving the goals of the Center and will provide significant and in-depth input on Center activities. The Center Director and team will be responsible for day-to-day operations and decisions. The Steering Committee's responsibilities will include the following:

- Provide input on the overarching work plans for Center activities and review ongoing progress and any updates to the work plans with an eye towards short- and long-term goals.

- Provide regular and significant input on the detailed plans for the learning communities including providing guidance on the types and frequency of activities, methods of engaging the learning communities, potential topics for meetings, and relevant experts/stakeholders that may contribute to the learning communities. The committee may also review learning community meeting agendas and materials.
- Provide input on advancing research activities.
- Identify supplemental activities to address emerging programmatic concerns.
- Provide input on the types, topics, and audience of the products produced by the Center as well as provide input to ensure that products are written in plain language.
- Identify and support opportunities for dissemination of the Center's and sponsored projects' work.
- Identify opportunities for the Center and the sponsored project teams to consult with policymakers and other key stakeholders.
- Facilitate communication and collaboration with other ACF-sponsored projects.
- Provide problem-solving feedback regarding the Center.

To facilitate these goals the Steering Committee will meet regularly. Core members of the committee must include the Center Director and other key leadership staff, the FPOs for the Center, the FPOs for each of the ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs, and other representatives from ACF as needed (as determined by the FPO of the Center). Other Center staff will be included in Steering Committee meetings (e.g., staff who support specific learning community, but who are not part of the overall center leadership team) as needed to support effective and efficient decision-making about Center priorities and plans.

The Center will organize and facilitate regular teleconferences, and, if appropriate, in-person meetings with the entire Steering Committee during the project period. Steering Committee members will review and provide input on committee meeting agendas. The proposed budget should reflect travel funds for the Director and relevant key staff to attend one in-person meeting and all costs and logistical support (i.e., hotel, travel, compensation).

Ad Hoc Technical Working Groups (TWG): For some Center activities or products the Steering Committee may recommend that a TWG be convened to inform the priorities and refine plans for the specific activity and/or product. When an ad hoc TWG is deemed necessary, the Center will, in consultation with the Steering Committee, nominate members and establish the TWG. The working groups may include experts and stakeholders from outside of the recipient/funded institution(s) with research, programmatic, and lived-experience expertise in the areas related to the goals of this grant program (see *Section I. Program Description*) or the ACF-sponsored research partnership grant programs. When selecting TWG members, efforts will be made to ensure representation from a broad range of institutions (such as academic, research, policy, and program organizations); fields of study; and a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The Center should convene and engage these groups purposefully to help realize ACF's goals for the Center and to expand the reach

of the Center's activities. The Center will be responsible for all costs and logistical support to convene these working groups.

E. ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In support of the overarching grant program goals (see *Section I.C Program Description, Grant Program Goals)*, the Center will be responsible for the following additional tasks:

Supplemental Activities. During the project period, the Center will be called upon to complete several supplemental activities to respond to pressing needs that fall within the scope of the Center and in accordance with the negotiated terms and conditions of the award. The Center will work with federal staff to design, refine, and carry out these supplemental project activities, and as needed and appropriate, with additional consultants. The Center is expected to plan for approximately 10 percent of its effort to support such activities. These activities may overlap to some extent with activities and efforts done in pursuit of the Center's primary goals. Specific supplemental activities will be identified during the grant. However, a few examples of potential activities include:

- Developing research briefs on specific topics of interest to ACF and CCDF Lead Agencies.
- Developing an inventory of measures and indicators to assess specific constructs of interest to ACF and CCDF Lead Agencies.
- Developing and validating data collection protocols and instruments to include in federal research examining CCDF policies.

Meetings and Conferences. Regular, in-person meetings can help deepen understanding, strengthen connections, and promote collaboration among individuals, institutions, and perspectives. The Center will be expected to attend and participate in specific ACF-sponsored meetings and other conferences that provide opportunities to disseminate resources and information in support of the Center's building capacity and evaluation capacity among ACF-sponsored research partnerships, communicating research, and advancing research goals (see *Section I.C Program Description, Grant Program Goals)*. The proposed budget should reflect travel funds for the Director and at least one key staff person to attend the required meetings and all costs and logistical support (i.e., hotel, travel, compensation) for any proposed meetings or conferencing activities. Meetings and conferences include:

- *Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC) Annual Meeting.* It is expected that key Center staff will attend the annual meeting of CCEEPRC, which is held in Washington, DC (if conditions permit). The meeting brings together grant recipients and contracted researchers funded by ACF and federal and state CCDF administrators to discuss child care policy research. This is an excellent opportunity for the Center to build relationships with key stakeholders and to discuss implications of the Center's work.

- *National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC; Biennual)*. It is expected that Center staff will work with sponsored project teams to coordinate and facilitate submissions to the conference as well as attend and participate as needed. NRCEC is held in Washington, DC (if conditions permit).
- If requested by federal staff, meetings for state, territory, and tribal administrators (e.g., State and Territory Administrators Meeting, which is usually held annually in Washington DC; Tribal Administrators Meeting, which is usually held in a state with a federal tribe) conducted by OCC technical assistance.
- Support sponsored project team participation in other relevant conferences (e.g., Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM), etc.)

There may be other opportunities for the Center to attend or participate in meetings that would facilitate the goals of the Center and these should be determined in conjunction with the Steering Committee.

If, during the project period, OPRE and/or recipients are required to adjust program and/or grant requirements due to COVID-19 or other emergency, OPRE will exercise maximum flexibilities as needed. Requirements may be conducted virtually, or timelines may be modified in consultation with OPRE.

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

II. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:
CA (Cooperative Agreement)

Estimated Total Funding:
$1,500,000

Expected Number of Awards:
1

Award Ceiling:
$1,500,000

Per Budget Period

Award Floor:
$1,000,000
Per Budget Period

Average Projected Award Amount:
$1,500,000
Per Budget Period

Anticipated Project Start Date:
09/30/2022

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

Additional Information on Project Periods and Explanation of 'Other'

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

Applications requesting an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period, or per project period, as stated in this section, will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. This disqualification applies only to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the first 12-month budget period for projects with multiple budget periods. If the project and budget period are the same, the disqualification applies to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the project period. Please see *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors.*

Note: For those programs that require matching or cost sharing, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period or by project period for fully funded awards, even if the projected commitment exceeds the required amount of match or cost share. **A recipient's failure to provide the required matching amount may result in the disallowance of federal funds.** For more information on these requirements, see *Section III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching.*

ACF will provide funding as specified on the Financial Assistance Award for each budget period of this project activity, subject to the availability of funds. ACF will accept applications from the recipient for continued annual funding under this agreement beyond the 12-month budget period but within the approved project period on a noncompetitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the recipient, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the government. ACF will determine satisfactory progress for continuation of the federal award by assessing the recipient's semi-annual Performance Progress Reports.

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

ACF staff will collaboratively negotiate with the recipient of funds regarding the roles and responsibilities outlined in this opportunity before finalizing the cooperative agreement. This will include discussions regarding whether there are gaps or weaknesses identified by the review panel that need to be addressed, such as additional areas of expertise or support needed within

the Center's organizational structure and working with the recipient to address significant gaps or weaknesses.

ACF will monitor the recipient, providing guidance and technical assistance. ACF will work collaboratively with the recipient on the Center activities and to accomplish the project goals. ACF will facilitate collaboration and coordination with other ACF-sponsored recipients and projects (e.g., research projects, training and technical assistance providers) and ACF program offices (e.g., OCC).

The FPO of the Center, the FPOs for each of the ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs, and other ACF staff, as needed, will participate in the Steering Committee to provide input, information, assistance, and feedback reflecting ACF's programmatic and research goals and to provide significant and in-depth input on project activities and progress. ACF staff will provide feedback regarding proposed plans, products, and other materials developed to ensure that they are filling needs and are relevant and translatable to the policy and practice communities. ACF staff may also participate in the ad hoc technical working groups.

III. Eligibility Information

III.1. Eligible Applicants

The applicant eligibility is unrestricted except as noted in this section. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors* for more information on required documentation regarding the Center Director(s)' credentials and experience. The required documentation is described in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*.

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

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

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement:
No

For all federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all criteria listed in 45 CFR § 75.306.

For awards that require matching by statute, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards, even if the projected commitment exceeds the amount required by the statutory match. **A recipient's failure to provide the statutorily required matching amount may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

For awards that do not require matching or cost sharing by statute, where "cost sharing" refers to any situation in which the recipient voluntarily shares in the costs of a project other than as statutorily required matching, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards. These include situations in which contributions are voluntarily proposed by a recipient or subrecipient and are accepted by ACF. Non-federal cost sharing will be included in the approved project budget so that the recipient will be held accountable for proposed non-federal cost sharing funds as shown in the Notice of Award (NoA). **A recipient's failure to provide voluntary cost sharing of non-federal resources that have been accepted by ACF as part of the approved project costs and that have been shown as part of the approved project budget in the NoA, may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

III.3. Other

Application Disqualification Factors

Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not eligible and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Award Ceiling Disqualification

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

Required Electronic Application Submission

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

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

Missing the Application Deadline (Late Applications)

The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.* Electronic applications submitted to Grants.gov after 11:59 pm ET on the due date, as indicated by a dated and time-stamped email from Grants.gov, will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. That is, applications submitted to Grants.gov, on or after 12:00 am ET on the day after the due date will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Applications submitted to Grants.gov at any time during the open application period, and prior to the due date and time, which fail the Grants.gov validation check, will not be received at, or acknowledged by ACF.

Each time an application is submitted via Grants.gov, the submission will generate a new date and time-stamp email notification. Only those applications with on-time date and time stamps that result in a validated application, which is transmitted to ACF will be acknowledged.

The deadline for receipt of paper applications is 4:30 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. Paper applications received after 4:30 pm ET on the due date will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. **Paper applications received from applicants that have not received approval of an exemption from required electronic submission will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.**

OPRE Disqualification Factor
Applications will be disqualified from the application review and from award if the application submission does not include written evidence in the curriculum vitae and/or biographical sketch that: the proposed PI(s) [who will serve as Center Director(s)] has earned a masters or doctorate or equivalent in a relevant field, conducts research as a primary professional responsibility, and has articles published in peer-reviewed journals and gray literature. *Section IV.2. Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation* for more information.

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

OPRE Review Team
Center to Support Research and Evaluation Capacity
c/o ICF International
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax
VA
22031-6050

877-350-5913
703-934-3740
ccdf.eval@icf.com

Application Packages

Electronic Application Submission:

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

Applications in Paper Format:
For applicants that have received an exemption to submit applications in paper format, Standard Forms (SFs), assurances, and certifications are available in the "Select Grant Opportunity Package" available in the NOFO's Grants.gov Synopsis under the Package tab at Grants.gov. See *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission* if applicants do not have an Internet connection or sufficient computing capacity to upload large documents (files) to Grants.gov.

Federal Relay Service:
Hearing-impaired and speech-impaired callers may contact the Federal Relay Service (FedRelay) for assistance at www.gsa.gov/fedrelay.

IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

FORMATTING APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS
Each applicant applying electronically via Grants.gov is required to upload only two electronic files, excluding SFs and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-approved forms. No more than two files will be accepted for the review, and additional files will be removed. SFs and OMB-approved forms will not be considered additional files.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:

Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)
AOR is the designated representative of the applicant/recipient organization with authority to act on the organization's behalf in matters related to the award and administration of grants. In signing a grant application, this individual agrees that the organization will assume the obligations imposed by applicable Federal statutes and regulations and other terms and conditions of the award, including any assurances, if a grant is awarded.

Point of Contact
In addition to the AOR, a point of contact on matters involving the application must also be identified. The point of contact, known as the Project Director or Principal Investigator, should not be identical to the person identified as the AOR. The point of contact must be available to answer any questions pertaining to the application.

Application Checklist
Applicants may refer to *Section VIII. Other Information* for a checklist of application requirements that may be used in developing and organizing application materials.

Accepted Font Style
Applications must be in Times New Roman (TNR), 12-point font, except for footnotes, which may be TNR 10-point font. Pages that contain blurred text, or text that is too small to read comfortably, will be removed.

English Language
Applications must be submitted in the English language and must be in the terms of United States (U.S.) dollars. If applications are submitted using another currency, ACF will convert the foreign currency to U.S. currency using the date of receipt of the application to determine the rate of exchange.

Page Limitations
Applicants must observe the page limitation(s) listed under "PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:." Page limitation(s) do not include SFs and OMB-approved forms.

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

Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements
The following elements of the application submission are exempt from the double-spacing requirements and may be single-spaced: the table of contents, the one-page Project Summary, required Assurances and Certifications, required SFs, required OMB-approved forms, resumes, logic models, proof of legal status/non-profit status, third-party agreements, letters of support, footnotes, tables, the line-item budget and/or the budget justification.

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

Applications that have more than one scanned page of a document on a single page will have the page(s) removed from the review.

For applicants that submit paper applications, double-sided pages will be counted as two pages. When the maximum allowed number of pages is reached, excess pages will be removed and will not be made available to reviewers.

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

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

Copies Required
Applicants must submit one complete copy of the application package electronically. Applicants submitting electronic applications need not provide additional copies of their application package.

Applicants submitting applications in paper format must submit one original and two copies of the complete application, including all SFs and OMB-approved forms. The original copy must have original signatures.

Signatures
Applicants submitting electronic applications must follow the registration and application submission instructions provided at Grants.gov.
The original of a paper format application must include original signatures of the authorized representatives.

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

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

ACF generally does not encourage submission of scanned documents as they tend to have reduced clarity and readability. If documents must be scanned, the font size on any scanned documents must be large enough so that it is readable. Documents must be scanned page-for-page, meaning that applicants may not scan more than one page of a document onto a single page. Pages with blurred text will be removed from the application.

PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:

With the exception of Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-approved forms, the application submission is limited to 100 pages in its entirety.

Application File One. Applicants must number the pages of File 1 beginning with the Table of Contents. File 1 must include a project description with the following:

1. Table of Contents (single-spaced)
2. Project Summary/Abstract (single-spaced, one page maximum)
3. Project Narrative (double-spaced; Sections must be carefully labeled to ease reviewers' identification of information relevant to the review criteria. It is strongly encouraged that

the approach be organized according to the sections presented in the list below. Additional headers and subheaders may also be used to organize the content of each section.)

- Approach
    - Objectives and Proposed Priorities
    - Plan to Build Research and Evaluation Capacity among ACF-Sponsored Research Partnerships
    - Plan to Communicate Research
    - Plan to Advance Research
    - Plan for Supplemental Activities
    - Staff Roles and Qualifications
    - Management Plan

4. Project Timeline and Milestones
5. Organizational Capacity
6. Budget and Budget Justification

Application File Two. Applicants may only have one appendix file. Examples of items in the appendix file include, but are not limited to the following:

- Legal Status of Applicant Entity
- Supporting Documentation of Staff Qualifications (e.g., Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV) and/or Biographical Sketch for PI(s) and key staff).
- Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
- Letters of Support, Memoranda of Understanding, and/or Third-Party Agreements
- Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities
- Other Materials in Support of the Proposal
- References

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

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

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

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

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

Adherence to the Two-File Requirement
No more than two files will be accepted for the review. Applications with additional files will be amended and files will be removed from the review. SFs and OMB-approved forms will not be considered additional files.

Application Upload Requirements
ACF strongly recommends that electronic applications be uploaded as Portable Document Files (PDFs). One file must contain the entire Project Description and Budget Justification; the other file must contain all documents required in the Appendices. Details on the content of each of the two files, as well as page limitations, are listed earlier in this section.

To adhere to the two-file requirement, applicants may need to convert and/or merge documents together using a PDF converter software. Many recent versions of Microsoft Office include the ability to save documents to the PDF format without need of additional software. Applicants using the Adobe Acrobat Reader software will be able to merge these documents together. ACF recommends merging documents electronically rather than scanning multiple documents into one document manually, as scanned documents may have reduced clarity and readability.

Applicants must ensure that the version of Adobe Acrobat Reader they are using is compatible with Grants.gov. To verify Adobe software compatibility please go to Grants.gov and click on "Applicants" at the top bar menu and select "Adobe Software Compatibility", which is listed under "Applicant Resources." The Adobe verification process allows applicants to test their version of the software by opening a test Workspace PDF form. Grants.gov also includes guidance on how to download a supported version of Adobe, as well as troubleshooting instructions for use, if an applicant is unable to open the test form.

The Adobe Software Compatibility page located on Grants.gov also provides guidance for applicants on filling out a Workspace PDF form. In addition, it addresses local network and/or computer security settings and the impact this has on use of Adobe software.

Required SFs and OMB-approved Forms
SFs and OMB-approved forms are uploaded separately at Grants.gov. These forms are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices files. See *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* for the listing of required SFs, OMB-approved forms, and required assurances and certifications.

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

Use only file formats supported by ACF
Applicants must submit applications using only the supported file formats listed here. While

ACF supports all of the following file formats, **we strongly recommend that the two application submission files (Project Description and Appendices) are uploaded as PDFs in order to comply with the two-file upload limitation.** Documents in file formats that are not supported by ACF will be removed from the application and will not be used in the competitive review. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make any awards based on an incomplete application.

ACF supports the following file formats:

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

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

FORMATTING FOR PAPER APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS:
The following requirements are only applicable to applications submitted in paper format. Applicants must receive an exemption from ACF in order for a paper format application to be accepted for review. For more information on the exemption, see "*ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission'" at* *www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/howto#chapter-6*.

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

Applicants using paper format should download the application forms package associated with the NOFO's Synopsis on Grants.gov under the Package tab.

Applicants are advised that the copies of the application submitted, not the original, will be reproduced by the federal government for review. **All application materials must be one-sided for duplication purposes. All pages in the application submission must be sequentially numbered.**

Addresses for Submission of Paper Applications
See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* for addresses for paper format application submissions.

Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

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

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)	Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.	Form is available at http://www.hhs.gov/ ohrp/ assurances/ forms/index.html. General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at http://www. hhs.gov/ ohrp/ . Applicants may also contact OHRP by email (OHRP@HHS.gov) or by phone (240-453-6900).
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Required of all applicants. Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and project award period. Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: http://www.sam.gov.	See *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* for more information.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Submission required of all applicants with the application package. If it is not submitted with the application package, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.	Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non- Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non- Construction Programs	Submission is required for all applicants when applying for a non-construction project. SFs must be used. Forms must be submitted by the application due date. By signing and submitting the SF-424B, applicants are making the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination.	Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project.
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.	If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and submit the SF-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

Additional Required Assurances and Certifications

Mandatory Grant Disclosure

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

Disclosures must be sent in writing to:

The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Grants Management, ATTN: Grants Management Specialist, 330 C Street, SW., Switzer Building, Corridor 3200, Washington, DC 20201

And to:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, ATTN: Mandatory Grant Disclosures, Intake Coordinator, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Cohen Building, Room 5527, Washington, DC 20201

Fax: (202) 205-0604 (Include “Mandatory Grant Disclosures” in subject line) or

Email: grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov

Non-Federal Reviewers

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

submitted electronically, ACF will omit the same specific salary rate information from copies made for use during the review process.

The Project Description

The Project Description Overview

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

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

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

Letter of Intent
Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify ACF of their intention to submit an application under this funding opportunity. Please submit a letter of intent by the deadline date listed in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. The letter of intent should include the following information: number and title of this funding opportunity; the name and address of the applicant organization; and the name, phone number, fax number and email address of a contact person.

Letter of intent information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications. **The letter of intent is optional**. Failure to submit a letter of intent **will not** impact eligibility to submit an application and **will not** disqualify an application from competitive review.

The letter of intent should be submitted via email to ccdf.eval@icf.com.

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

Project Summary
Provide a summary of the application project description. It must be clear, accurate, concise, and without cross-references to other parts of the application. The summary must include a brief description of the proposed grant project including the needs to be addressed, the proposed services, and the population group(s) to be served.

Please place the following at the top of the Project Summary:

- Project Title
- Applicant Name
- Address

- Contact Phone Numbers (Voice, Fax, Cell)
- Email Address
- Website Address, if applicable

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

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

Non-Profit Organizations

Proof of Non-Profit Status Options:

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

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

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

For-Profits and Small Businesses
For-profit organizations (including small businesses) applying for funding must submit the following to provide proof of their legal status: Documentation establishing the power granted to the entity to enter into contractual relationships and/or accept awards (i.e., articles of incorporation, bylaws).

Additional Eligibility Documentation
Applicants must provide the additional, required documentation, or required credentials, to support eligibility for an award, as described in *Section III. Eligibility Information* of this funding opportunity.

Curriculum Vitae or Biographical Sketch for the Center Director
Applications must include written evidence that the proposed PI(s) [who will serve as Center Director(s)] has earned a masters or doctorate or equivalent in a relevant field, conducts research as a primary professional responsibility, and has articles published in peer-reviewed journals and gray literature.

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

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

Applicants must provide a 5-year plan for accomplishing the goals set forth in *Section I. Program Description* and, when noted below, detailed 2-year work plans that identify specific timelines, milestones, activities, and tasks. The details of the Center's work plan will be refined based on input from federal staff and finalized after the award is made.

1. Objectives and Proposed Priorities
Applicants must propose priorities related to ACF's programmatic concerns, the ACF-sponsored research partnership grant program purpose and goals discussed in Sections *I.A., I.B.,* and *I.C.* and the goals for the sponsored research projects which will form the basis of the Center's 5-year agenda. The successful applicant will demonstrate the importance of the proposed priorities and objectives, will describe rigorous and appropriate approaches to meet the objectives, and will convincingly demonstrate that the Center activities will significantly enhance the ACF-sponsored research projects research and evaluation capacity, support collaborative research among sponsored project teams, and increase the child care policy research field knowledge base.

2. Plan to Build Research and Evaluation Capacity among ACF-Sponsored Research Partnerships
Applicants must describe their general approach and the principles that will guide how they will support the research and evaluation activities of the sponsored research project teams, build research and evaluation capacity, and support collaborative research. The approach should provide a brief analysis of the best practices for fostering research and evaluation capacity and supporting collaborative research through learning communities. The analysis must demonstrate the applicant's grasp of the state of the field and the implications for supporting the learning communities and sponsored project teams. The general approach must support project teams' efforts to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research that they can use for planning as well as policy, program, and practice decisions.

The applicant must also propose a detailed 2-year plan that describes in detail the methods and activities that will be used to support four learning communities for the ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs and to facilitate information sharing across the different learning communities. The plan to support the research and evaluation capacity of the sponsored project teams should be responsive to the goals and needs of the specific ACF-sponsored research partnerships grant programs and the individual projects. The plan must, at a minimum, describe how the methods and activities will support communication, shared learning, and foster in-depth collaboration across project teams. The plan must also outline what resources or tools would be used or developed and how they will be developed. The plan also must describe how the Center will engage regularly with the sponsored project teams.

The plan should describe how the work with the learning communities and sponsored project

teams can be leveraged to inform the broader field including CCDF lead agencies that are not grant recipients, technical assistance centers, and others.

Applicants must also propose a process that will be used to plan for the learning communities throughout the full project period. The planning process must describe how the Steering Committee and the sponsored project teams will be significantly involved in the planning and how this process will be responsive to the unique needs of the different learning communities.

3. Plan to Communicate Research

Applicants must clearly describe a robust dissemination strategy that will be used throughout the 5-year project period. The strategy should address disseminating work produced by the sponsored project teams and the Center. In addition to identifying potential products, applicants must include a detailed plan that describes a process for identifying and developing products and communications and communicating findings from research conducted outside of the Center on relevant topics to effectively reach and inform key audiences, including the research community, federal and state policymakers, program administrators, and any partners or communities engaged in the course of research. The proposed plan must demonstrate strong links to the goals and objectives of the Center and incorporate innovative mediums that meet the identified audience's need.

The proposal must include details regarding Center resources that will address dissemination (e.g., logistics and technical support, quality control, and management). As appropriate to the planned activities, the proposal will fully describe the expertise, skills, and knowledge of proposed personnel or partners with respect to the completion of high-quality products, including presentations, events, or communication through other media. This should include a description of the processes that will be instituted to ensure that all information disseminated is of high-quality, written in plain language, and appropriate for the pre-determined audience. Applicants must clearly describe how they will ensure dissemination products will be compliant with the standards for electronic media (section 508 of the amended Rehabilitation Act ["Section 508"]).

4. Plan to Advance Research

Applicants must demonstrate sufficient capacity, planning, and flexibility to conduct the activities for advancing research as discussed in *Section I. Program Description.* The proposed activities must be detailed and clear, describing the specific objectives and methodology for each proposed activity, as appropriate; and the skills, expertise, and knowledge of any personnel or stakeholders and/or consultants involved. Applicants must discuss the appropriateness of the approaches proposed and the methodological and logistical considerations.

The applicant must also describe a process for working with sponsored project teams to develop plans to analyze information and the data from the common measures across research projects. Further, applicants must discuss the proposed infrastructure and processes for a data coordinating center, including all the activities necessary to obtain, house, and analyze data across the sponsored research projects, setting up data sharing agreements with sponsored research project teams, developing file sharing protocols, creating merged data sets with data from multiple project teams, developing codebooks for the merged data sets, and creating cross-site analyses plans.

The applicant must also propose a 2-year plan outlining examples of potential activities and an approach, that will be used throughout the grant, to synthesize the research and evidence about topics of interest to ACF-sponsored projects, CCDF Lead Agencies, and the child care and early education policy research community more broadly.

5. Plan for Supplemental Activities

Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to conduct supplemental activities as discussed in *Section I.E Program Description*, *Additional Responsibilities* in a timely and efficient way. Applicants must discuss proposed infrastructure and processes to support these activities, including the Center staff and relevant partners, as well as the effort and funds devoted to completing supplemental activities as they arise. ACF does not expect applicants to provide highly detailed plans for supplemental activities in the application; however, proposals must provide evidence of sufficient capacity, planning, and flexibility to support timely and high-quality supplementary activities related to the Center's goals.

6. Staff Roles and Qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed Center staff have the experience to manage projects of comparable size, scope, and complexity, as well as the expertise to carry out the activities of the Center on time, within budget, and with a high degree of quality and meet the requirements outlined in *Section I.D. Program Description, Structure and Staff Expectations*. More specifically, applicants must:

- Describe the experience the Center Director and project leadership have managing projects of comparable size, scope, and complexity as the proposed project.
- Provide evidence that the Center Director and key staff, and others (i.e., partners, consultants, advisors) have knowledge and expertise in CCDF, subsidy policy, public assistance programs, and child care and early education more broadly.
- Provide evidence that the proposed Center staff (including partners, consultants, advisors) have experience working and collaborating with CCDF Lead Agencies, facilitating research and evaluation capacity building in Lead Agencies, and building and sustaining research partnerships between state agencies and researchers.
- Describe the expertise of the Center Director and key staff in conducting research with low-income families and agencies administering subsidy or other public assistance programs.
- Identify all proposed partners, consultants, or advisors, document their expertise, and describe their roles and responsibilities or how their services will be utilized. Include letters of commitment or intent, if possible.
- Identify staff responsible for managing all key project activities, including managing the budget, and describe their roles and responsibilities, their professional and/or technical qualifications to execute proposed activities, a table with the proportion of time they will be committed to the project in relation to their other duties, the period of time they will be employed, and whether their continued employment will be

dependent solely on the funds to be awarded under this announcement. This includes describing personnel responsible for managing the budget and federal funds.

- Provide evidence that the proposed project staff have experience building and sustaining a robust dissemination strategy; writing research-based and policy-relevant products for a diverse audience, especially child care and early education policy makers and funders; and have experience and expertise in plain language.
- Provide evidence that the proposed project staff have experience securely obtaining, housing, and analyzing data.
- If proposing to use subaward(s), explain how the prime recipient plans to maintain a substantive role in the project.

7. Management Plan

Applicants must provide a sound and feasible plan of action that describes how the Center will be managed and center activities will be successfully completed. The plan must describe, in detail, how the Center will be structured and managed, how the timeliness of activities will be ensured, how quality control will be maintained, and how costs will be controlled. Applicants should discuss how they will manage the Center as a whole and manage and coordinate with any partners, consultants, or advisors.

- Describe how the Center will be managed to ensure that the Center staff and all partners operate as a cohesive team and that the goals of the project are carried out efficiently and cost-effectively. Discuss the responsibilities and expected contributions of each partner organization, consultants, and advisors; reporting relationships; and lines of authority. Applicants should include an organizational chart portraying the management, supervision, and administration of the Center across all subcontracts, subawards, and other formal relationships.
- Describe the proposed role and contribution of the Steering Committee, including its proposed configuration and membership as well as the Steering Committee members' relevant skills and experience that will contribute to the goals and objectives of the Center.
- Discuss an approach to communication among Center staff, partner organizations, consultants, advisors, and ACF.
- Describe the procedures for developing ad hoc Technical Working Groups, and how the Center will communicate with and utilize any Technical Working Groups.

Project Timeline and Milestones

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

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

- Organizational charts.
- Resumes.
- Curricula Vitae (CV).
- Biographical Sketches (short narrative description).
- Evidence that the applicant organization, and any partnering organizations, have relevant experience and expertise with administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of programs similar to that offered under this funding opportunity.
- Evidence that each participating organization, including partners, contractors and/or subrecipients, possess the organizational capability to fulfill their role(s) and function(s) effectively.
- Information on compliance with federal/state/local government standards.
- Job descriptions for each vacant key position.

Resumes must be included for any Center leadership positions including the Center Director and/or Co-Director, staff who will lead the learning communities, dissemination staff, and data analyses and management staff.

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

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

These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

- Financial and Program Management
- Property (if applicable by program legislation)
- Procurement
- Performance and Financial Monitoring and Reporting
- Subrecipient Monitoring and Management
- Record Retention and Access
- Remedies for Noncompliance

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

that will be responsible for maintaining oversight of program activities staff, and, if applicable, partner(s) and/or subrecipient(s).

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

Third-Party Agreements

Third-party agreements include Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Letters of Commitment. Letters of Commitment and MOUs must both clearly describe the roles and responsibilities for project activities and the support and/or resources that the third-party (i.e., subrecipient, contractor, or other cooperating entity) is committing. The Letters of Commitment and MOUs must be signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make such commitments on behalf of their organization. General letters of support are **not** considered to be third-party agreements.

Applicants must provide Letters of Commitment or MOUs between recipients and third-parties (i.e., subrecipients, contractors, or other cooperating entities). In addition to clearly describing the roles and responsibilities for project activities and support and/or resources that the third-party is committing, these agreements must detail work schedules and estimated remuneration with an understanding that a finalized agreement will be negotiated once the successful applicant is awarded the grant.

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

The Project Budget and Budget Justification

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

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

forms to use in this application.

Special Note: *The Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2022 and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this funding opportunity may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. For the Executive Level II salary, please see "Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables" under https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/. The salary limitation reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits, indirect costs and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.*

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

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

The proposed budget and budget justification (i.e., narrative) for the Center should reflect the full project period that is proposed by the applicant. The budget must include itemized expenses for the project and a detailed narrative budget justification that explains all the calculations. Indirect costs are counted towards the award ceiling. This section should discuss how the budget for the full project period supports the proposed activities. Levels of effort and/or funding should generally reflect the approximate percentages devoted to specific program goals outlined in *Section I.C.* and supplemental activities outlined in *Section I.E*.

The budget for the first 2 years of funding should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate support for the specific activities proposed, while linking to the overall plan and budget for the full project period. The justification should include the appropriateness of the level and distribution of funds to successfully complete ACF's goals (as described in *Section I.C.)* and supplemental activities (as described in *Section I.E.*) over the 5-year project period. The budget and budget justification must include support for key project personnel to participate in the meetings and conferences described in *Section I.E.*

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

General

Use the following guidelines for preparing the project budget and budget justification. The budget justification includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail. Applications should only

include allowable costs in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

Personnel

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

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

Fringe Benefits

Description: Costs of employee fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees in addition to regular salaries and wages. For more information on Fringe Benefits please refer to 45 CFR § 75.431. Do not include the fringe benefits of consultants, contractors, and subrecipients.

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

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

Travel

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

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

Equipment

Description: "Equipment" means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per

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

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

Supplies

Description: Costs of all tangible personal property, other than included under the Equipment category. This includes office and other consumable supplies with a per-unit cost of less than $5,000. See 45 CFR § 75.453 for more information.

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

Contractual

Description: Cost of all contracts and subawards except for those that belong under other categories such as equipment, supplies, construction, etc. Include third-party evaluation contracts, if applicable, and contract or subawards with secondary recipient organizations (with budget detail), including delegate agencies and specific project(s) and/or businesses to be financed by the applicant. Costs related to individual consultants should be listed on the Other line. Recipients are required to use 45 CFR §§ 75.326-.340 procurement procedures, and subawards are subject to the requirements at 45 CFR §§ 75.351-.353.

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

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

Other

Description: Enter the total of all other costs. Such costs, where applicable and appropriate, may include, but are not limited to: consultant costs, local travel, insurance, food (when allowable), medical and dental costs (non-personnel), professional service costs (including audit charges), space and equipment rentals, printing and publications, computer use, training costs (such as tuition and stipends), staff development costs, and administrative costs. Please note costs must be allowable per 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

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

Indirect Charges

Description: Total amount of indirect costs. This category has one of two methods that an applicant can select. An applicant may only select one.

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

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

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

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

Commitment of Non-Federal Resources

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

For all federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria listed in 45 CFR § 75.306.

For awards that require matching or cost sharing by statute, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources (at or above the statutory requirement) in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards. **A recipient's failure to provide the statutorily required matching or cost sharing amount (and any voluntary committed amount in excess) may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

For awards that do not require matching or cost sharing by statute, recipients are not expected to provide cost sharing or matching. However, recipients are allowed to voluntarily propose a commitment of non-federal resources. If an applicant decides to voluntarily contribute non-federal resources towards project costs and the costs are accepted by ACF, the non-federal resources will be included in the approved project budget. The applicant will be held accountable for all proposed non-federal resources as shown in the Notice of Award (NoA). **A recipient's failure to meet the voluntary amount of non-federal resources that was accepted by ACF as part of the approved project costs and that was identified in the approved budget in the NoA, may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

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

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

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Disclaimer

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, the public reporting burden for the Project Description is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. The Project Description information collection is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires 03/31/2025. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Application Submission Options

Electronic Submission via Grants.gov

This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for ACF program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

Electronic Delivery

ACF is participating in the Grants.gov initiative to provide the grant community with a single site to find and apply for funding opportunities. ACF applicants are required to submit their applications online through Grants.gov.

How to Register and Apply through Grants.gov

Read the following instructions about registering to apply for ACF funds. Applicants should read the registration instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

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

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

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

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

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

***Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account*:** A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant). If you work for or consult with multiple organizations, you can have a profile for each organization under one Grants.gov account. In such cases, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all your grant profiles. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the UEI for the organization in the UEI field. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html

EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles: After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is then expected to log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to

complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been assigned the AOR role. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html

***Track Role Status*:** To track your role request, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html

When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role; this step is often missed and is crucial for valid and timely submissions.

How to Submit an Application to ACF via Grants.gov

Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each NOFO, you can create individual instances of a workspace.

For an overview of applying on Grants.gov using Workspaces, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

***Create a Workspace*:** Creating a workspace allows you to complete an application online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

***Complete a Workspace*:** Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the state of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

***Adobe Reader*:** If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drive(s), then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html

***Mandatory Fields in Forms*:** In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.

***Complete SF-424 Fields First*:** These forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and SAM UEI. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

***Submit a Workspace*:** An application may be submitted through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov

recommends submitting your application **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

***Track a Workspace*:** After successfully submitting a Workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html

Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific funding opportunity, contact the number listed in the application package of the grant you are applying for.

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

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

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

When ACF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submission, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

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

Applicants with slow internet connections should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Therefore, applicants should allow enough time to prepare and submit the application before the package closing date.

Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received submission message in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role.

Issues with Federal Systems

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

Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission

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

Paper Format Application Submission

An exemption is required for the submission of paper applications. See the preceding section on "*Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission.*"

Applicants with exemptions that submit their applications in paper format, by mail or delivery, must submit one original and two copies of the complete application with all attachments. The original and each of the two copies must include all required forms, certifications, assurances, and appendices, be signed by the AOR, and be unbound. The original copy of the application must have original signature(s). See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* of this funding opportunity for address information for paper format application submissions. Applications submitted in paper format must be received by 4:30 pm ET on the due date.

Applicants may refer to *Section VIII. Other Information* for a checklist of application requirements that may be used in developing and organizing application materials. Details concerning acknowledgment of received applications are available in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times* in this funding opportunity.

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

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

All applicants are required to maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If a grant is awarded, the SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award. Your SAM registration must be renewed every 365 days to keep it active.

Plan ahead. Allow at least 10 business days after you submit your registration for it to become active in SAM and at least an additional 24 hours before that registration information is available in other government systems, i.e., Grants.gov.

This action should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in your inability to submit your application through Grants.gov or prevent the award of a grant. Applicants should maintain documentation (with dates) of their efforts to request a UEI, register for, or renew a registration, at SAM.

Please see the "Help" tab at https://sam.gov/content/help for more information and assistance with this process.

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

- Be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application or plan;
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active award or an application or plan under consideration by an OPDIV;
- Provide its UEI in each application or plan it submits to the OPDIV; and

- Ensure any proposed subrecipient(s) have obtained and provided to the recipient their UEI(s) prior to making any subawards (**Note:** Subrecipients are not required to complete full SAM registration.).

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

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

IV.4. Submission Dates and Times

Due Date for Letter of Intent

Due Date for Letter of Intent 06/27/2022

06/27/2022

Due Dates for Applications

Number of Days from Publication 60

07/26/2022

Explanation of Due Dates

The due date for receipt of applications is listed in the *Overview* section and in this section. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors*.

Electronic Applications

The deadline for submission of electronic applications via Grants.gov is 11:59 pm ET on the due date. Electronic applications submitted at 12:00 am ET on the day after the due date will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Applicants are required to submit their applications electronically via Grants.gov unless they received an exemption through the process described in *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission.*

ACF does not accommodate transmission of applications by email or facsimile.

Instructions for electronic submission via Grants.gov are available at: www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html.

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

Mailed Paper Format Applications

The deadline for receipt of mailed, paper applications is 4:30 pm ET on the due date. Mailed paper applications received after the due date and deadline time will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Paper format application submissions will be disqualified if the applicant organization has not received an exemption through the process described in *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission*.

Hand-Delivered Paper Format Applications
Hand-delivered applications must be received on, or before, the due date listed in the *Overview* and in this section. These applications must be delivered between the hours of 8:00 am ET and 4:30 pm ET Monday through Friday (excluding federal holidays).

Applications should be delivered to the address provided in *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements*.

Hand-delivered paper applications received after the due date and deadline time will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Hand-delivered paper format application submissions will be disqualified if the applicant organization has not received an exemption through the process described in *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission*.

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

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

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

Acknowledgement of Received Application

Acknowledgement from Grants.gov

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

Applicants will also receive an email acknowledging that the received application is in the **Grants.gov validation process**, after which a third email is sent with the information that the submitted application package has passed, or failed, the series of checks and validations.

Applications that are submitted on time that fail the validation check will not be transmitted to ACF and will not be acknowledged by ACF.

Acknowledgement from ACF of an electronic application's submission:

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

Acknowledgement from ACF of receipt of a paper format application:
ACF will not provide acknowledgement of receipt of hard copy application packages submitted via mail or courier services.

IV.5. Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," or 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities." No action is required of applicants under this funding opportunity with regard to E.O. 12372.

IV.6. Funding Restrictions

Costs of organized fund raising, including financial campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions are unallowable. Fund raising costs for the purposes of meeting the Federal program objectives are allowable with prior written approval from the Federal awarding agency. (45 CFR § 75.442)

Proposal costs are the costs of preparing bids, proposals, or applications on potential Federal and non-Federal awards or projects, including the development of data necessary to support the non-Federal entity's bids or proposals. Proposal costs of the current accounting period of both successful and unsuccessful bids and proposals normally should be treated as indirect (F&A) costs and allocated currently to all activities of the non-Federal entity. No proposal costs of past accounting periods will be allocable to the current period. (45 CFR § 75.460)

Pre-award costs are not allowable.

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

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

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

IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

Submit paper applications to one of the following addresses. Also see *ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission at www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/howto#chapter-6*.

Submission by Mail

OPRE Review Team
Center to Support Research and Evaluation
c/o ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax
VA
22031-6050

Hand Delivery
Same as Above

Electronic Submission
See *Section IV.2.* for application requirements and for guidance when submitting applications electronically via Grants.gov.

For all submissions, see *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.

V. Application Review Information

V.1. Criteria

Please note: With the exception of the notice of funding opportunity and relevant statutes and regulations, reviewers must not access, or review, any materials that are not part of the application documents. This includes information accessible on websites via hyperlinks that are referenced, or embedded, in the application. Though an application may include web links, or embedded hyperlinks, reviewers must not review this information as it is not considered to be part of the application documents. Nor will the information on websites be taken into consideration in scoring of evaluation criteria presented in this section. Reviewers must evaluate and score an application based on the documents that are presented in the application and must not refer to, or access, external links during the objective review.

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

Objectives and Proposed Priorities **Maximum Points:** 5

1. The extent to which the proposal is clearly written, concise, organized, and provides appropriate details. Sections are clearly labeled to make it easier for reviewers to identify information relevant to the evaluation criteria. **(up to 2 points)**
2. The extent to which the Center's proposed priorities address ACF's programmatic concerns, the grant program's purpose and goals discussed in *Section I. Program Description,* and the goals for the sponsored research projects. **(up to 3 points)**

Plan to Build Research and Evaluation Capacity among ACF-Sponsored Research Partnerships **Maximum Points:** 25

1. The extent to which the applicant describes a strong approach to support the research and evaluation activities of the sponsored project teams, build research and evaluation capacity, and support in-depth collaborative research. The approach must demonstrate a strong understanding of the best practices for fostering research and evaluation capacity and supporting collaborative research through learning communities. **(up to 5 points)**
2. The extent to which the applicant proposes a clear and detailed 2-year plan that outlines appropriate methods and activities that will be used to support the learning communities by fostering communication, shared learning, and in-depth collaboration across sponsored project teams. Innovative methods and activities that support active engagement in learning communities will strengthen the application. **(up to 8 points)**
3. The extent to which the detailed 2-year plan describes appropriate resources or tools that will be used or developed to support the learning communities. **(up to 4 points)**
4. The extent to which the plan describes how the work with the learning communities and sponsored project teams can be successfully leveraged to inform the broader field. **(up to 3 points)**
5. The applicant clearly describes a feasible and effective process that the Center will use to plan for the learning communities that allows for significant input by the Steering Committee and the sponsored project teams throughout the full project period. **(up to 5 points)**

Plan to Communicate Research **Maximum Points:** 10

1. Includes a detailed plan that clearly describes an effective process for identifying and developing products that will effectively communicate research findings and other information to key audiences. **(up to 4 points)**
2. Describes the processes that will be instituted to ensure that all information disseminated (written products, oral presentations, etc.) is of high quality, written in plain language, and appropriate for the pre-determined audience. **(up to 3 points)**
3. Provides evidence that the applicant has the available resources to support the proposed dissemination strategy and quality assurance processes. **(up to 3 points)**

Plan to Advance Research **Maximum Points:** 15

1. The extent to which the proposal provides evidence of sufficient capacity and flexibility to conduct timely and high-quality work related to the Center's goals. **(up to 2 points)**
2. The extent to which the applicant proposed an effective process for working with sponsored project teams to develop plans and analyze common data from their research projects. **(up to 4 points)**
3. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the proposed infrastructure and processes for the data coordinating center are appropriate and effective for securely obtaining, housing, and analyzing cross-site data. **(up to 5 points)**
4. The extent to which the proposed 2-year plan describes appropriate examples of potential activities and a sound approach to synthesize the research and evidence about topics of interest to sponsored projects, CCDF Lead Agencies, and the child care and early education policy research community more broadly. **(up to 4 points)**

Plan for Supplemental Activities **Maximum Points:** 5

1. The extent to which the proposal provides evidence of sufficient capacity and flexibility to conduct timely and high-quality work related to the Center's goals.

Staff Roles and Qualifications **Maximum Points:** 20

1. The applicant clearly identifies staff (including all partners, consultants, or advisors, etc.) responsible for managing all key Center activities and describes their roles and responsibilities and demonstrates that their professional and/or technical qualifications and expertise are sufficient for their assigned role and responsibilities and to successfully execute the proposed activities. The applicant also demonstrates that the proposed Center staff meet the requirements outlined in *Section I.D. Program Description, Structure and Staff Expectations*. **(up to 12 points)**. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - Center Director and Leadership Staff: Have sufficient experience to manage a project of comparable size, scope, and complexity.
    - Communication Staff: demonstrates a history of successfully writing research-based, policy-relevant products in plain language for diverse audiences especially child care and early education policy makers and funders.
    - Data Management and Analysis Staff: have sufficient experience to securely obtain, house, and analyze data.
    - Budget Staff: have experience and expertise managing federal funds.
2. The applicant clearly communicates how the proposed Center staff has experience and successfully collaborated with CCDF Lead Agencies around research and evaluation, experience and expertise building research and evaluation capacity with state agencies, and experience successfully building and sustaining research partnerships between state agencies and researchers. **(up to 5 points)**
3. The composition of staff, their level of commitment, and the proportion of time they will be committed to the project in relation to their other duties, and the period of time they will be employed are sufficient to complete all the proposed Center activities on time, within budget, and with a high degree of quality. **(up to 3 points)**

Management Plan **Maximum Points:** 10

1. The applicant outlines a detailed and feasible management structure and procedures that will ensure all members of the project will operate as a cohesive team to efficiently complete the proposed work on time, within budget, and with a high degree of quality. This includes clearly defined functional relationships among all members of the Center and any consultants, advisors, steering or management committees, technical workgroups, and/or coordinating bodies. **(up to 4 points)**
2. The applicant outlines a thoughtful, detailed, and realistic approach to communication, decision-making, and identification and resolution of challenges that will minimize risks to unsuccessful completion of the proposed activities. **(up to 3 points)**
3. The applicant clearly describes the proposed role and contribution of the Steering Committee, its proposed configuration and membership, and the Steering Committee members' relevant skills and experience and describes how this will contribute to successfully meeting the goals and objectives outlined in this NOFO for the Center. **(up to 2 points)**

4. The applicant clearly describes effective procedures for creating ad hoc Technical Working Groups that will contribute to successfully meeting the goals and objectives outlined for the Center in this NOFO. **(up to 1 point)**

Organizational Capacity **Maximum Points:** 5

1. The recipient organization and their partners have the capacity, resources, and facilities to successfully carry out all functions, roles, and tasks of the Center on time, within budget, and to a high standard of quality. This includes evidence of successful administration of a project of similar size, scope, and complexity; compliance with the terms and conditions of a federal grant; and oversight of federal funds.

Budget and Budget Justification **Maximum Points:** 5

1. The proposed project costs and the requested period of support are fully justified, reasonable, and sufficient to complete all the Center activities. The applicant includes a detailed budget with the itemized expenses for the project and a detailed narrative budget justification that clearly explains all calculations. **(up to 4 points)**

2. The proposed project costs include sufficient funds for the Center to participate and support the required meetings. **(up to 1 point)**

V.2. Review and Selection Process

No grant award will be made under this funding opportunity on the basis of an incomplete application. No grant award will be made to an applicant that does not have a UEI and an active SAM registration. See *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)*.

Initial ACF Screening

Each application will be screened to determine whether it meets any of the disqualification factors described in *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors*.

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

Objective Review and Results

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

Results of the competitive objective review are taken into consideration by ACF in the selection of projects for funding; however, objective review scores and rankings are not binding. Scores and rankings are only one element used in the award decision-making process. If identified in *Section I. Program Description*, ACF reserves the right to consider preferences to fund organizations serving emerging, unserved, or under-served populations, including those populations located in pockets of poverty. In addition, ACF reserves the right to evaluate

applications in the larger context of the overall portfolio by considering geographic distribution of federal funds (e.g., ensuring coverage of states, counties, or service areas) in its pre-award decisions.

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

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

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

Applications may be funded in whole or in part depending on (1) the combination of projects that best meet the needs of ACF and the CCDF program such as prioritizing applications that complement or fill gaps in ACF's current research portfolio, and (2) the federal funds available.

Post-Award Requests Involving Real Property

All real property costs, including supporting documentation, are subject to ACF administrative review. Recipients, and if applicable, subrecipient(s), will be required to provide detailed listings of all real property addresses and their associated costs (45 CFR §75.436, §75.439, §75.462, and §75.465) used and claimed under this federal award. This includes all real property owned or leased by the recipient and, if applicable, subrecipients. Information on facilities, administrative buildings, and offices must be provided. Information for any and all real property costs claimed under the award must be provided. For more information, see ACF Property Guidance pages, including Rent/Lease Arrangement Guidance, Real Property Documentation, and Unallowable Property Costs.

After the initial award, if there are any modifications, budget revisions, and/or additional requests for funding, and they impact any of the original approved real property or real property-related costs, the real property listing and related costs documentation requested must be updated.

Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants

ACF is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), www.fapiis.gov/, before making any award in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance. An applicant may review and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency has previously entered into FAPIIS. ACF will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 45 CFR § 75.205(a)(2) Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.

Non-Federal Reviewers Reference
Please refer to *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* of this funding opportunity for information on non-federal reviewers in the review process.

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

V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

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

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

VI.1. Federal Award Notices

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

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

Information on allowable pre-award costs and the time period under which they may be incurred is available in *Section IV.6. Funding Restrictions,* if applicable. Project costs that are incurred prior to the receipt of the NoA are at the recipient's risk.

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

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

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

Please review all HHS regulatory provisions for Termination at 2 CFR § 200.340.

HHS Grants Policy Statement
The HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS) is the Department of Health and Human Services' single policy guide for discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. ACF grant awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS GPS, which covers basic grants processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as well as important agency-specific requirements. The general terms and conditions in the HHS GPS will apply as indicated unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary that are specified in the NoA. The HHS GPS is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/discretionary-post-award-requirements#book_content_0.

Equal Treatment of Faith-Based Organizations

A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the federal government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom, nondiscrimination, and conscience protections in federal law, including the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*), the Coats-Snowe Amendment (42 U.S.C. 238n), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e–1(a) and 2000e–2(e)), Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12113(d)(2), section 1553 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18113), the Weldon Amendment (e.g., Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Public Law 116–94, 133 Stat. 2534, 2607, div. A, sec. 507(d) (Dec. 20, 2019)), or any related or similar federal laws or regulations. Religious accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

Consistent with 45 CFR § 87.3(b), a faith-based organization that receives direct financial assistance from HHS may not engage in any explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization) as part of the programs or services funded with direct financial assistance from the HHS awarding agency. Such an organization, whether faith-based or not, also shall not, in providing services funded by HHS, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice, as provided in 45 CFR § 87.3(d).

Projects funded under this announcement are expected to provide adequate protections of human subjects, including approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), as applicable.

VI.3. Reporting

Performance Progress Reports:
Semi-Annually

Reporting Requirements

Recipients under this funding opportunity will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports periodically throughout the project period. Information on reporting requirements is available on the ACF website at www.acf.hhs.gov/discretionary-post-award-requirements#chapter-2.

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

Financial Reports:
Semi-Annually

VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s)

Program Office Contact

Alysia
Blandon
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Division of Child and Family Development
330 C St SW
Washington
DC
20416
877-350-5913
703-934-3740
ccdf.eval@icf.com

Office of Grants Management Contact

Bridget
Shea Westfall
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Grants Management
ICF International
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax
VA
22031-6050
877-350-5913
ccdf.eval@icf.com

Federal Relay Service:

Hearing-impaired and speech-impaired callers may contact the Federal Relay Service (FedRelay) at www.gsa.gov/fedrelay.

VIII. Other Information

Reference Websites

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

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

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

ACF "How To Apply For A Grant" https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant.

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

Grants.gov Accessibility Information www.grants.gov/ web/grants/accessibility-compliance.html.

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

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

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre

Office of Child Care https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ

Application Checklist

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

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications*. See http://www.hhs.gov/ ohrp/ assurances/ forms/ index.html for additional information. This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov	Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Referenced in *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* in the funding opportunity.	A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants. Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to http://www.sam.gov.	application and project award period.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application package or prior to the award of a grant.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non- Construction Programs	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section. They are required for applications that include only non-construction activities.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	"Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Letter of Intent	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Project Description*.	Submission is due by the Letter of Intent due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4.*
Table of Contents	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submit with the application by the due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Project Summary	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description.* The Project Summary is limited to one single-spaced page.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Proof of Non-Profit Status	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*.	Proof of non-profit status should be submitted with the application package by the application due date and time listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4.* of the NOFO. If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
Mandatory Grant Disclosure	Requirement, submission instructions, and mailing addresses are found in the "Mandatory Grant Disclosure" in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications*.	If applicable, concurrent submission to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Office of the Inspector General is required.
The Project Budget and Budget Justification	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*.	Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C. Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (IDR)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*. The IDR must be submitted with the application package.	If the IDR is available by the application due date, it must be submitted with the application package. If it is not available by the application due date, listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*, it may be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
The Project Description	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Eligibility Documentation by For-Profit Organizations	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*.	Submission is required with the application by the Application Due Date in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.