

Notice of Funding Opportunity
Application due Friday, August 7, 2026








ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Children's Bureau

Tribal Court Improvement Program

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CS-0020



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Before you begin

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

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

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

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

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

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

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

Apply by the application due date

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, August 7, 2026.



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



Step 1: Review the Opportunity

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Basic information

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Children's Bureau

Helping tribal courts handle child welfare cases.

Summary

The Tribal Court Improvement Program, an award provided by the Children's Bureau, will help tribal courts assess and improve how they handle American Indian and Alaska Native child welfare cases. Recipients will conduct assessments or use the results of prior assessments to improve tribal court hearings and legal representation.

Funding details

Type: Grant

Expected total program funding: \$943,000

Total expected awards: 7

Minimum award amount for the first budget period (award floor): \$50,000

Maximum award amount for the first budget period (award ceiling): \$250,000

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

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



Have questions?

See [Contacts and Support](#).

Key facts

Opportunity name:
Tribal Court Improvement Program

Opportunity number:
HHS-2026-ACF-ACYF-CS-0020

Federal assistance listing:
93.586

NOFO version: Original

Key dates

Application submission deadline: Friday, August 7, 2026

Expected project start date: September 30, 2026

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

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are Indian tribes, as defined by subsections (E) and (I) of section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304), or tribal consortia that meet one of these conditions:

- Operating an approved title IV-E program in accordance with section [479B of the Social Security Act](#) (42 U.S.C. 679c).
- Planning to operate a title IV-E program and have received a [Tribal Title IV-E Plan Development Grant](#), as authorized by [section 476 of the Social Security Act](#) (42 U.S.C. 676).
- Having a court that handles foster care or adoption cases.

A tribal consortium is a partnership between two or more tribes that work together to achieve a common objective.

Other eligibility criteria

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

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

Disqualifying factors

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

We will not consider an application that:

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

Application limits

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

Cost sharing

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

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

Post-award requirements

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

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

Statutory authority

[Title IV, Part B, Subpart 2—MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Section 438 of the Social Security Act \(42 U.S.C. 629h\)](#).

Agency priorities

Required alignment with ACF vision, mission, values, priorities, and guiding principles

The recipient of this award must implement any funds awarded under this NOFO to effectuate program goals or agency priorities in accordance with [ACF's vision, mission, values, priorities, and guiding principles](#) when authorized. Funded activities must advance ACF's vision of resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure children, youth, families, and communities, and support ACF's mission to foster health and well-being through effective, accountable, and compassionate human services when awarded in any programs that authorize these priorities.

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

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

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

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

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

4. **Family Stability and Child Well-Being:** Strengthen families, promote safe and stable home environments, and improve outcomes for children and youth through prevention-focused and developmentally appropriate services.
5. **Work, Self-Sufficiency, and Economic Mobility:** Support pathways to employment, job retention, and economic independence for individuals and

families, including through workforce development, education, and supportive services.

6. **High-Quality Early Care and Learning:** Where applicable, invest in high-quality early childhood programs that support school readiness, healthy development, and long-term success.

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

Program description

Purpose

The Tribal Court Improvement Program helps tribal courts assess the effectiveness of and support improvements to how these courts and/or legal representation handle American Indian and Alaska Native child welfare cases. This includes cases involving family preservation, family reunification, guardianship, and adoption.

The Tribal Court Improvement Program supports ACF's mission to foster health and well-being by providing partnership and effective delivery of human services.

Through this program, ACF partners directly with tribes to strengthen tribal court systems that oversee child welfare matters, ensuring that children are safe, families are supported, and court proceedings are timely, fair, and legally sound.

This program supports the ACF Priority Area of Ensuring Value Alignment in Funding. The Tribal Court Improvement Program advances the core priority that children are served by court systems that are prepared to address the needs of children and families in a timely manner, decreasing the time it takes for a child to achieve a permanent placement with a family.

Goals

If awarded, you will undertake activities to improve the handing of child welfare cases through activities such as assessing how tribal courts handle child welfare proceedings, and making changes based on that assessment, and supporting implementation of such changes.

These changes can include:

- Ensuring that children's safety, permanency, and well-being are met in a timely and complete manner.
- Improving the quality of court hearings and legal representation, including engagement of parties, through training and efforts to increase substantive and procedural justice.

Program activities

Assessments and implementation

Projects awarded under this opportunity must use funds to assess their tribal courts' child welfare practices, develop a plan for how to make changes based on the results of

such an assessment, and/or implement a plan to make such changes. Your application must clearly demonstrate which of these activities will be included in your project.

The first year of the award must be used for start-up activities that are aligned with the project's purpose and that will inform future project years. This may include an assessment of effectiveness of tribal courts and/or legal representation in cases concerning child welfare and/or the development of a plan for how you will make changes based on the results of such an assessment.

Years 2 through 4 will then build on this work through creation and approval of an implementation plan based on the needs assessment, and/or the implementation of such a plan that results in changes and improvements in the work of the courts. Assessments and implemented changes must be based on what the tribe considers important and in need of review and/or correction. The following resources may be helpful:

- [Syntheses of Tribal Court Assessment Strategies \[PDF\]](#) – Strategies that prior Tribal Court Improvement Program recipients have used to assess their tribal court systems.
- [Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance \[PDF\]](#) – A set of model court measures, developed in part by the Children's Bureau, which includes templates for a needs assessment. These tools were developed with many experts in the Indian Child Welfare Act and tribal court practice. The measures were tested with tribes and several states.

Collaboration

Tribal courts will have primary responsibility for leading the implementation of the proposed project. Your project must also show meaningful, ongoing collaboration with the tribal child welfare agency. This means you will identify and work on shared goals and activities with tribal courts and the agency that provides child welfare services. The goal of this collaboration is to increase the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth in the child welfare system, as specified in [section 438 of the Social Security Act](#) and in alignment with [ACF Mission and Priorities](#).

Many recipients under this program collaborate with others outside the court. Common collaborators include:

- Treatment providers.
- School representatives.
- Foster parents.
- Parents whose children have been in foster care.
- Foster care alumni.
- Other relevant tribal entities, agencies, or community members.

Dissemination

The goal of this program is to help tribes or tribal consortia make improvements that will benefit children and families. Those efforts may also benefit other tribal communities. You may share information and knowledge generated by these projects so lessons learned can be integrated into policy and practice. You will have opportunities to work with the Children’s Bureau to share your project findings and work with other Tribal Court Improvement Program projects to share products and findings. You do not need to discuss this activity in your application.

Funding policies and limitations

Changes in HHS regulations

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

General policies

- We will only make awards if this program receives funding. If Congress appropriates funds for this purpose, we will move forward with the review and award process.
- Support beyond the first budget period will depend on:
 - Appropriation of funds.
 - Satisfactory progress in meeting your project’s objectives.
 - A decision that continued funding is in the government’s best interest.
- If we receive more funding for this program, we will consider:
 - Funding more applicants.
 - Extending the period of performance.
 - Awarding supplemental funding.
- To the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders, you may not use funds from this NOFO for any diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEI and DEIA) activities. This includes:
 - DEI- or DEIA-related research.
 - Activities that discriminate or show preference based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or other protected traits.
 - Any efforts that promote a “discriminatory equity ideology.” To the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders, ACF will also not allow funds awarded under this NOFO to support any services or activities that inculcate or promote gender ideology.

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

Program-specific limitations and policies

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

- Construction.
- Purchase of real property.
- Major renovation.
- Hiring attorneys or judges for regular client representation or judicial duties, filling routine court personnel positions, or otherwise replacing funding for tribal government positions.

Note: States and tribes, including tribes with a state-tribal agreement, can opt in to support regular attorney representation with federal financial participation under [title IV-E, the Foster Care Legal Representation rule](#).

See [2 CFR 200.420 – 200.475](#) for information on costs that are always unallowable or have restrictions.

Indirect costs

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

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

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

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

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

Subawards

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

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

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

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

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

Salary rate limitation

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

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

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

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

Program income

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



Step 2:

Get Ready to Apply

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Find the application package

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

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

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

Get registered

SAM.gov

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

To register:

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

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

Once you register:

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

Grants.gov

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

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

Learn more

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



Step 3:

Build Your Application

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Application checklist

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

File one: Narratives

Use the Project Narrative Attachment form.

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

File two: Attachments

Insert each in a single Other Attachments form.

Component	Included in page limit?
<input type="checkbox"/> ACF priorities alignment attestation	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cost agreement	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed tribal court assessment document, relevant sections, or summary (if applicable)	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational capacity supporting information (including organization chart)	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Third-party agreements	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of effort certification	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of human subjects certification	No

Standard forms

Use each required form in Grants.gov.

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

Application contents and format

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

Your organization's authorized official must certify your application.

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

Required format

Page limit for file one and file two combined: 60 pages

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

Accepted file formats

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

Document formats

Paper size: 8 ½ inches x 11 inches

Margins: 1 inch all around

Language: English

If possible, include page numbers.

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

Fonts

Font: Times New Roman

Color: Black

Size: 12-point font

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

Spacing

Table of contents: Must be single-spaced.

Project summary: Must be single-spaced.

Project narrative: Must be double-spaced.

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

Attachments: Can be single-spaced.

Tables and footnotes throughout: Can be single-spaced.

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

File one

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

This file includes:

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

Table of contents

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

Project summary

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

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

Project narrative

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

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

In it, you must:

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

Purpose and need

Geographic location

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

For example, you might serve all those eligible as members/citizens on tribal land or members/citizens regardless of geographic location.

Need for assistance

Identify the problems you plan to solve. These problems could be physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, etc. To do so:

- Demonstrate the need, including the nature and scope of the problem.
- Provide, as appropriate, supporting documentation, such as letters of support and testimonials, in your attachments.
- Include any relevant data based on planning studies or needs assessments. You may refer to them in the endnotes or footnotes of your application.
- Use demographic data and participant or beneficiary information where you can.

Objectives

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

Response

Approach

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

Note: Projects awarded under this opportunity must use funds to conduct assessments, develop plans to meet needs identified in previously completed assessments, and/or implement a plan developed to meet needs identified in assessments. In the approach section of your application, you should include information to clearly explain the activities that will be implemented through your project.

Action plan and obstacles

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

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

Describe how you will do the following activities:

- **Identify a team.**

Describe who will be responsible for carrying out each proposed project activity.

- **Tip:** Beyond court and other legal staff, we recommend creating a broad multidisciplinary team. Consider the groups mentioned in the collaboration section.

- **Identify and prioritize tribal needs.**

Describe your plan for identifying the tribe's priorities and needs. These should drive your assessment or strategies.

- **Identify assessment of questions and/or strategies.**

Depending on the focus of your project, you must provide the questions you will ask in your assessment, the full plan for conducting the assessment, and/or the strategies that will be used to improve court practices based on an assessment. Include a tentative action plan for the first year of the project.

Include the following, as appropriate, based on the focus of your proposed project:

- Whether you will complete an assessment or whether you will hire an external provider to do so.
 - How you will manage an assessment plan so that it meets the program’s purpose and the tribes’ needs.
 - How you will assess and implement strategies around continuity of services including using technology to allow remote court proceedings (section 438(a)(1)(F), (2)(C), and (3) of the Social Security Act).
 - The strategies you will use to improve court practices based on an assessment.
- **Identify how you will collect data.**

Identify how you will collect data and information to inform your project. This may include, if an assessment is conducted, how information will be collected to inform an assessment, and/or what data will be collected to measure project progress.

 - **Tip:** The Children’s Bureau defines “data” broadly. It can include administrative data from a child welfare agency or court; information obtained through surveys, focus groups, interviews, or community forums; and other approaches to gather data or information that are meaningful in your community and context.
 - **Use your new or existing assessment to inform, implement, and monitor strategies for improvement.**

Describe how you will improve and/or monitor the courts’ child welfare practices, court hearings, legal representation, and engagement of parties based on the results of your new or existing [assessment](#). Your plans may be based on the cultural or linguistic needs of the tribe, as prioritized by the tribe’s team.

 - **Tip:** You may describe improvements in terms of cultural or linguistic structures, values, and traditions.
 - **Collaborate with tribal child welfare agencies.**

Describe how you will collaborate with your tribal child welfare agency and other key community members, if applicable. Refer to the [collaboration](#) section of the program description.

Project timeline and milestones

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

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

Impact

Project performance evaluation plan

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

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

Expected outcomes

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

Resources and capabilities

Organizational capacity

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

- Provide evidence that your team has the relevant experience and expertise needed to carry out your project.
- Describe your team's experience (including any partnering organizations) with administering, developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating similar projects.
- Provide evidence that your team, including partnering organizations, has the organizational capability to fulfill their roles and functions effectively.
- You must disclose your plan to enter into subaward agreements. If planning subawards, describe the work each subrecipient will complete.
- Provide some supporting information in the organizational capacity supporting information section of your [attachments](#).

Plan for oversight of federal award funds and activities

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

- Financial and program management.
- Property management.
- Procurement.
- Performance and financial monitoring and reporting.
- Subrecipient monitoring and management.
- Record retention and access.
- Remedies for noncompliance.
- Prior written approval.

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

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

Project sustainability plan

You must propose a plan for project sustainability after the period of federal funding ends. We expect you to sustain key elements of your project. These elements can include strategies or services and interventions that have improved practices and outcomes.

Provide an approach to project sustainability that is effective and feasible. Describe:

- The key people and organizations whose support you will require.
- The types of alternative support you will require to maintain the project.
- If the proposed project involves key project partners, describe how you will maintain their cooperation or collaboration after the federal funding ends.

Protection of sensitive or confidential information

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

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

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

Dissemination plan

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

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

Line-item budget and budget narrative

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

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

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

As you develop your budget, consider:

- If the costs are necessary, reasonable, allocable, and consistent with your project's purpose and activities.
- How you calculate your costs in ways that are clear and repeatable.
- The restrictions on spending funds. See the [funding policies and limitations](#).
- Funds to support required travel for the project director, evaluator, and two other key staff to attend a kickoff meeting in Year 1 and an annual convening each year of the grant recipients in Washington, DC.

Please also review the Standard Form instructions.

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

In general, you must:

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

Proprietary or personally identifiable information

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

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

File two: Attachments

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

This file includes all attachments.

ACF priorities alignment attestation

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

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

I hereby attest and certify that:

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

Insert Date of Signature:

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

Signature of AOR :

Indirect cost agreement

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

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

Additional eligibility documentation

- Completed tribal court assessment
If you are using an existing assessment of your tribal courts in child welfare cases, include the entire document, relevant sections, or a summary.

Organizational capacity supporting information

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

- Organizational charts, including all partners.
- Resumes, biographical sketches, or curricula vitae for all key personnel.
- Job descriptions for each vacant key position.
- Copy or description of your organization's fiscal control and accountability procedures.
- Information on compliance with federal, state, and local government standards.

Third-party agreements

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

Any such agreement must:

- Describe each party's roles and responsibilities for project activities.
- Describe the support and resources that the third party is committing to the proposed project.
- Be signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make such commitments.
- Identify the primary applicant and all collaborators responsible for project activities if the agreement is for a collaboration or consortia application.

Maintenance of effort certification

Not included in the page limit.

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

Protection of human subjects' certification

Not included in the page limit.

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

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

Standard forms

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

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

Important: Public information

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

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

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

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



Step 4:

Learn About Review and Award

In this step

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Application review

Initial review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Merit review process

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

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

Criteria summary

Criterion	Total number of points = 110
1. Need for assistance and objectives	10 points
2. Approach	40 points
3. Organizational capacity	20 points
4. Project performance evaluation plan	20 points
5. Project budget and budget justification	10 points
6. ACF Priority Alignment	10 points

Scoring criteria

Need for assistance and objectives

Maximum points: 10

Please refer to the [need for assistance](#) and [objectives](#) sections to view full requirements. Reviewers will consider the extent to which you do the following:

- 1.1 Describe the problem you wish to solve in legal, judicial, or court practice with child welfare.
- 1.2 Provide compelling data (defined broadly) that demonstrates the need for assistance.
- 1.3 Clearly describe your objectives in your first year of the award related to conducting a needs assessment and/or carrying out strategies to improve child welfare, legal, judicial, or court practice.
- 1.4 Clearly describe your planned or expected outcomes related to child welfare, legal, judicial, or court practice that you hope to learn more about and/or achieve.

Approach

Maximum points: 40

Please refer to the approach section to view full requirements. In reviewing the approach, reviewers will consider the extent to which you do the following:

- 2.1 Describe anticipated obstacles to accomplishing your plan and include strategies to address them.
- 2.2 Identify a project team to carry out all proposed project activities.
- 2.3 Provide an approach that describes how you will identify and prioritize tribal needs.
- 2.4 Show a logical flow between assessment questions, strategies, findings, and

resulting changes to be implemented to improve court practice, as appropriate.

2.5 Describe how you will collect data and information through an assessment to identify needed court improvements needed, or how findings from an existing assessment will inform the strategies you will implement to improve court practices.

2.6 Describe how planned improvements will be implemented and monitored as appropriate.

2.7 Describe how you plan to engage the child welfare agency or agencies in your approach.

2.8 Include a plan for fulfilling your goals on time, including milestones for accomplishing project tasks and ensuring quality.

2.9 Include how you will assess and implement strategies around continuity of services, including using technology to allow remote court proceedings.

Project performance evaluation plan

Maximum points: 20

Please refer to the project performance evaluation plan section to view full requirements. Reviewers will consider the extent to which you do the following:

3.1 Provide a clear plan for how you will evaluate your project's performance and how this evaluation will contribute to continuous quality improvement.

3.2 Describe how you will collect and manage data in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes.

3.3 Identify any potential obstacles to implementing the project performance evaluation and how you will address them.

3.4 Provide a timeline for how you review information from the performance evaluation and apply it to your ongoing project.

Organizational capacity

Maximum points: 20

Please refer to the organizational capacity section to view full requirements. Reviewers will consider the extent to which you do the following:

4.1 Show that your proposed staff has enough relevant knowledge, experience, and capabilities to plan and carry out a project of this size, scope, and complexity.

4.2 Show that you have experience of carrying out similar projects, which will enable you to carry out the project effectively.

4.3 Show that you have appropriate staffing, effective data management approaches, and an organizational process that enables you to successfully collect and use data to inform and improve program quality.

4.4 Clearly define the role, responsibilities, and time commitments of each project staffer, including consultants, subcontractors, and partners. You explain how they are needed to successfully carry out the project.

4.5 Describe how you will sustain the project after the federal funding ends. You include the sources of support for continuing those efforts beyond the project period.

Project budget and budget justification

Maximum points: 10

Please refer to the budget and budget justification section to view full requirements.

Reviewers will consider the extent to which you do the following:

5.1 Provide a line-item budget (up to \$250,000) for the first year of the project period. You provide a narrative justifying the budget and explaining how you will spend award funds for the first year.

5.2 Show that the costs of the project are reasonable, considering the target population, the planned activities, and the expected results.

5.3 Show that your fiscal controls and accounting procedures will ensure prudent use of funds, timely disbursement, and accurate accounting.

Include costs for the project director and other key staff to attend meetings in Washington, DC, and include costs for virtual meetings if needed.

We do not consider voluntary cost sharing during merit review.

Alignment with ACF vision, mission, values, priorities, and guiding principles (Up to 10 points)

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

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

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

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

Scoring Considerations for the next three criteria:

- **High-scoring applications** will demonstrate clear understanding, intentional integration, and measurable alignment with ACF priorities across all three criteria.

- **Moderate-scoring applications** may reference ACF priorities but provide limited specificity, uneven integration, or minimal connection to measurable outcomes.
- **Low-scoring applications** will show minimal or unclear understanding of ACF priorities and lack meaningful connection to program design or performance.

6.1 Demonstrated Review and Understanding (Up to 2 Points)

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

Reviewers will look for:

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

6.2 Operationalization in Program Design and Implementation (Up to 3 Points)

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

- Ensuring Value Alignment in Funding.

Reviewers will assess if the applicant:

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

6.3 Integration into Performance and Continuous Improvement (Up to 5 Points)

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

- Ensuring Value Alignment in Funding.

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the application:

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

Risk review

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

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

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

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

Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review and scoring results including the 10 points for Alignment with *ACF Vision, Mission, Values, Priorities, and Guiding Principles* to the extent permitted by law. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.
- Organizations serving emerging, unserved, or underserved populations.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects by considering geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant.
- The application's compliance with this NOFO's prohibition on using funds awarded under this NOFO to support [DEI and DEIA activities](#), to the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders.
- Funding Preference for Alignment with Agency Priorities. Before final funding decisions are made, division leadership will review awards for consistency with applicable laws and alignment with [agency priorities](#).

We may:

- Fund applications in whole or in part.
- Fund applications at a lower amount than requested.

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

We will not fund:

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

Award notices

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

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

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

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



Step 5: Submit Your Application

In this step

Application submission and deadlines

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Application submission and deadlines

Application

Deadline

Due on Friday, August 7, 2026.

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

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

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

Grants.gov submission

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

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

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

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

Issues with federal systems

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

Exemptions for paper submissions

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

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

To submit your application, mail it to:

Children's Bureau Operations Center

c/o LCG, Inc.

6000 Executive Boulevard, Suite 410

Rockville, MD, 20852

Follow these requirements when you submit your paper application:

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

Intergovernmental review

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



Step 6:

Learn What Happens After Award

In this step

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Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

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

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award, including the [ACF Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and, if applicable, any program-specific terms and conditions. We incorporate this NOFO by reference.
- The rules listed in [2 CFR 200](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, effective October 1, 2025. These replace those in 45 CFR 75, with some exceptions in [2 CFR 300](#).
- The HHS [Grants Policy Statement \(GPS\)](#). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#), Appendix D: HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements, and the [ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#).
- [45 CFR Part 87 Appendix B, Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations](#). This appendix explains the obligations of and protections for faith-based organizations applying for grants.
- Applicable program statute and regulations at 42 U.S.C. 629h (2021).

Reporting

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

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



Contacts and Support

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Agency contacts

Program

Catherine Heath

1-888-203-6161

cb@grantreview.org

Grants management

Sarah Viola

1-888-203-6161

cb@grantreview.org

Help with systems

Grants.gov

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

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

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can:

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

Reference websites

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

Paperwork Reduction Act disclaimer

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, the public reporting burden for the project description (project narrative, line-item budget, and justification) is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection information.

The project description information collection is approved under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number 0970-0139, which expires April 30, 2029. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Modifications

Modification Description	Updated Date