



Administration for Children and Families

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care Dissertation Grants

HHS-2023-ACF-OPRE-YE-0154

Application Due Date: 05/16/2024

**Due Date for Applications:**

FY2024: 5/16/2024

FY2025: 5/15/2025

# Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary .....  | 2  |
| I. Program Description.....  | 3  |
| II. Federal Award Information.....   | 10 |
| III. Eligibility Information .....   | 12 |
| III.1. Eligible Applicants.....  | 12 |
| III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching .....  | 12 |
| III.3. Other.....  | 13 |
| IV. Application and Submission Information.....                                  | 14 |
| IV.1. Address to Request Application Package .....                               | 14 |
| IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission .....                           | 15 |
| Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications .....                             | 20 |
| The Project Description .....  | 23 |
| The Project Budget and Budget Justification.....                                 | 30 |
| Application Submission Options .....   | 36 |
| IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) ..... | 38 |
| IV.4. Submission Dates and Times .....   | 38 |
| Explanation of Due Dates .....   | 39 |
| Acknowledgement of Received Application .....                                    | 40 |
| IV.5. Intergovernmental Review.....  | 40 |
| IV.6. Funding Restrictions .....   | 40 |
| IV.7. Other Submission Requirements .....  | 41 |
| V. Application Review Information .....  | 41 |
| V.1. Criteria.....   | 41 |
| V.2. Review and Selection Process.....   | 46 |
| V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates .....                      | 48 |
| VI. Federal Award Administration Information.....                                | 48 |
| VI.1. Federal Award Notices .....  | 48 |
| VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements .....                      | 48 |
| VI.3. Reporting .....  | 49 |
| VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s).....  | 49 |
| VIII. Other Information .....  | 50 |
| Reference Websites.....  | 50 |

**Funding Opportunity Title:**

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care Dissertation Grants

**Announcement Type:**

Modification

**Funding Opportunity Number:**

HHS-2023-ACF-OPRE-YE-0154

**Assistance Listing Number:**

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**Due Date for Applications:**

05/16/2024

**Due Date for Applications:**

FY2024: 5/16/2024

FY2025: 5/15/2025

## Executive Summary

**Notice:**

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

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is soliciting applications for Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care Dissertation Grants. Funds support dissertation research by advanced graduate students working on child care policy issues in partnership with a Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) agency or administrator and with faculty mentors. These grants focus on building capacity in the research field by:

1. addressing questions relevant to child care policy decision-making and program administration,
2. supporting applied research experiences through collaboration with CCDF agencies,
3. fostering mentoring relationships between faculty members and doctoral students.

OPRE is interested in research that addresses issues of significance related to CCDF; aims to inform policy decisions and solutions, particularly for populations that are underserved/understudied; and utilizes the most rigorous research methodology for the selected research question. Applicants must consult with a CCDF agency or administrator in the conceptualization of the research plan, from development and refinement of the research questions, through the proposed data collection or secondary analyses of data, interpretation, and dissemination of findings. Eligible tribally controlled land grant colleges and universities,

historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and faith-based institutions of higher education are encouraged to apply. The applicant organization must have a history of research and federal funding oversight and must have appropriate research support resources to support the student. The faculty mentor who will serve as Principal Investigator (PI) must have a Ph.D. or equivalent in the respective field and conduct research as a primary professional responsibility. Faculty mentors with doctoral training and research expertise must be able to provide proper supervision and quality control over the project and interactions with participating agencies to help ensure successful completion of sound dissertation research that addresses critical policy questions of interest to local CCDF partner(s) and ACF. To be eligible for award, the graduate student must provide evidence of an approved dissertation proposal with their application. This is a change from previous years when applicants were given additional time to submit evidence of an approved dissertation proposal after the application due date. The 2024 application due date and the due date for the evidence of an approved dissertation proposal are the same and are specified in this NOFO. For further information about prior awards made to Child Care Research Scholars, please refer to [www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-research-scholars-child-care-dissertation-grants](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-research-scholars-child-care-dissertation-grants). For more information about OPRE, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>. For information about the Office of Child Care (OCC) and CCDF, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ>. Please subscribe to this forecast at grants.gov to receive notifications of any updates.

## I. Program Description

### **Statutory Authority**

Section 658O(a)(5) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. 9858m(a)(5)).

### **Description**

CCDF is a \$9.5 billion block grant program authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act (Public Law 113-186) that provides funding to states, territories, and tribes to provide access to child care services for families with low incomes with children under age 13. The CCDF also provides funding to improve the quality of care by supporting efforts such as child care licensing, quality improvement systems, and training and education for child care providers and the workforce.

The CCDBG Act increased focus on balancing dual purposes: promoting economic self-sufficiency for low-income families and supporting healthy development and school success for children. It is designed to meet these program purposes through the following expanded goals: (1) protect the health and safety of children in child care; (2) help parents make informed consumer choices and access information to support child development; (3) provide equal access to stable, high-quality child care for low-income children; and (4) enhance the quality of child care and the early childhood workforce.

In 2016, OCC in ACF under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), revised the CCDF Regulations found at 45 CFR Part 98 to provide more details and amend CCDF policies. The CCDBG Act and the Part 98 regulations contain requirements to carry out the provisions outlined above, while giving lead agencies in states, territories, and tribes flexibility in the implementation of these provisions to address their particular circumstances and populations

served. See [Child Care and Development Fund Reauthorization | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#) for more information regarding CCDF reauthorization.

OCC invested significant resources in research and evaluation to identify effective policies and practices that support the implementation of CCDF, foster the employment and economic self-sufficiency of working parents with low incomes, and promote high-quality early care and education environments for children. Since 2000, CCDF discretionary funds for child care research and evaluation have supported a variety of projects that add to our knowledge in the areas of child care policy and practice. Previously funded Child Care Dissertation Grants have made significant contributions to the child care policy research field.

Recipients will use rigorous methods to study their proposed research questions. Methods may include quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and secondary analyses approaches. Methods should be chosen that are appropriate to the state of the field for the given research questions and the state of knowledge and understanding of the proposed constructs under study.

Student researchers will use an equity lens to the extent possible in their current work, and research questions, analyses and interpretation will identify paths for future work to advance understanding of equity-related issues for child care.

### **Equity**

*In line with the [HHS Equity Action Plan](#), scholars are encouraged to carry out projects that will help ACF advance equity in the delivery of human services. Examples of equity focused research include projects that examine historical and social context, processes and practices shaping access to services, and service implementation and outcomes for subgroups of interest, especially historically marginalized and minoritized communities. Equity-focused research plans also pay attention to distributions of power and privilege, by seeking to engage multiple voices, marginalized communities, and/or individuals with lived experiences in the research process and by discussing how equity and inclusion informed the proposed research questions, design and approach.*

To ensure that research is responsive to both the changing needs of families and children with low incomes and to questions of interest to OCC, graduate students are required to: (1) develop projects that clearly link to CCDF program goals, and (2) consult with state or local CCDF administrators in the design and implementation of their projects. Partnerships between the graduate student, his/her faculty mentor, and CCDF agencies or administrators are especially significant, as they ensure the research will be policy-relevant and help to foster the skills necessary to successfully contribute to both the policy and scientific communities. For CCDF state agency contact information and links to state CCDF administration websites, please visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts>. To learn more about how state-level policies and concerns fit within the broader national context, please visit OCC's website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource-library>. In particular, the CCDF Reports to Congress provide background information, summarize data regarding children and families served and types of care used, and highlight recent initiatives and research. You can find the Reports to Congress online at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/reports-to-congress>.

## **B. Goals and Requirements of the Child Care Dissertation Grants**

The Child Care Dissertation Grants aim to support research that has direct implications for child care policy decision making and program administration; to foster collaboration between researchers and CCDF agencies and/or administrators; to facilitate connections between graduate students, senior researchers in the field, and key stakeholders; and to support mentoring relationships between faculty mentors and doctoral students. Specifically, the goals of the grant program are to:

### **1. Build capacity in the early care and education field by supporting high-quality dissertation research and student-faculty collaboration and mentorship.**

The Child Care Dissertation Grants support the training and professional development of the next generation of early care and education researchers. Under the support of this project, students are expected to become autonomous researchers with specialized knowledge and skills to conduct rigorous research that is responsive to the unique context of the CCDF program, including its policies, practices, and populations served. Previous Child Care Scholars made significant contributions to the child care field.

The Child Care Dissertation Grants will fund original student dissertation work.

Each scholar will work in partnership with a faculty mentor. These mentor-student relationships will: a) support the scholar's independent line of research; b) encourage collaboration with qualified, experienced researchers in the field; and c) further the scholar's graduate training and professional development in policy-relevant, applied research. The faculty mentor, who will serve as the PI for the project, must have a doctoral degree and research expertise that is aligned with the goals of the proposed project in order to provide proper mentorship and guidance for the proposed activities. Students may also seek guidance from other qualified professionals, in addition to their faculty mentor, to support the successful execution of their projects.

### **2. Conduct rigorous research that has the capacity to inform child care programs, policies, and practices.**

The Child Care Dissertation Grants program supports high-quality dissertation projects that address issues of immediate relevance to CCDF programs and policies. Projects should contribute to the broader knowledge base by conducting applied research with clear significance to the CCDF program goals, policies, services, and/or populations served. All funded projects will use the most appropriate and rigorous research methods to answer the selected research question(s). This award may be used to fund the collection of new data and/or the analysis of existing datasets using rigorous qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches.

See *Section I.C. Program Description, Priority Topics for this Opportunity* for research topics of particular interest for this year's awards.

### **3. Support active communication, collaboration, and partnerships between researchers and CCDF policymakers.**

The Child Care Dissertation Grants aim to foster connections between researchers and child care policymakers in order to: a) ensure the funded research is responsive to the changing needs of child care programs, policies, and communities and b) increase programs' capacity to understand

and use research. To this end, partnerships between the graduate student, their mentor, and the CCDF agency or administrator are an essential component of the award program. Partnerships ensure the research will be relevant to CCDF policies and will teach the graduate student necessary skills in partnership building that will inform their continued contributions to the policy and scientific communities.

Scholars must maintain a collaborative partnership with a CCDF agency or administrator. Scholars' close partnership must be evidenced within the development of their proposal and selection and refinement of their research questions. Scholars are expected to carry out a responsive, culturally sensitive, tailored plan for engaging with their collaborative partners throughout the entire project and, if applicable, through data collection, with participating families and children. Consultation and collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders is expected for all projects, including those proposing secondary analysis of existing data sources. Child Care Dissertation Scholars will also engage their collaborative partners during the interpretation and dissemination of findings. Gathering feedback and input will greatly strengthen the research questions, analyses plans, and interpretation of results.

For the CCDF program office contact list, please visit:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts>.

#### **4. Foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research, policy, and practice communities.**

Results and implications of the studies funded through this opportunity should be shared with appropriate research, policy, and practice audiences. Participation in conferences, meetings, and dissemination activities facilitates connections between graduate students, senior researchers in the field, and key stakeholders. In order to facilitate communication and dissemination of research, scholars are required to participate in the following activities:

a. Conferences. For each budget period of the award (e.g., from September 30, 2024–September 29, 2025), the student and faculty mentor are required to attend *two* conferences:

1. The Biennial Meeting of the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC). This 2-day meeting is typically held in Washington, DC (although could be held virtually) and brings together OPRE recipients, contracted researchers funded by ACF, and Head Start and CCDF administrators to discuss early care and education research. To learn about previous CCEEPRC meetings, please visit: <https://www.researchconnections.org/federal-efforts/meetings/child-care-and-early-education-policy-research-consortium-cceeprc-meetings>.
2. ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC). This 3-day meeting is typically held in Washington DC (although could be held virtually) during alternating years. To learn more about previous NRCEC meetings, please visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/events/head-start-national-research-conferences>.
3. During a year in which NRCEC is not hosted, students should attend a professional society conference that corresponds to their project or area of expertise (e.g., Society for Research in Child Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children).

b. Meetings. Students and their faculty mentors are required to attend the annual Early Care and Education Scholars Recipient Meeting. Whenever possible, the Recipient Meeting takes 2 days and occurs prior to or subsequent to another required event (so as to reduce travel requirements).

c. Dissemination. The scholar is expected to prepare and carry out a thorough dissemination plan to effectively translate and share project findings with researchers, policymakers, and collaborative partners. This may include the development of manuscripts, briefs, posters, infographics, presentations, briefings, webinars, articles for inclusion in partner newsletters, and/or other products that would effectively communicate to key audiences. ACF seeks to promote transparency in the conduct of research and evaluations and to support making data available for potential secondary analyses (see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/acf-evaluation-policys> for the ACF Evaluation Policy). Recipients will consult with the Federal Program Officer and the Child and Family Data Archive to determine whether the project data and supporting metadata would meet the basic requirements for archiving (see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-and-family-data-archive-2018-2023> for information about data archiving).

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:

1. the percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the program or project funded with federal money; and,
2. 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 acknowledgement of federal assistance using this or a similar statement.

"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](#)."

### **C. Priority Topics for this Opportunity**

A range of priority research topics and areas for 2024 are identified. Proposals are encouraged but not required to address these topics. **Top topical priorities for the 2024 opportunity include (but are not limited to) improved understanding and building the evidence-base for:**

1. Understanding the **child care needs of diverse families with low-incomes** and/or improving policies and programs to increase access to high-quality child care for various subpopulations, including:
  1. families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, families who have transitioned off the TANF program, working families with low incomes at risk of needing TANF benefits;

2. families and children with a range of language, ethnic, and racial identities, including dual language learners and American Indian/Alaska Native families and children;
  3. immigrant families and children, including refugees and victims of trafficking;
  4. families with children with special needs or disabilities;
  5. families and children in contact with the child welfare system, especially abused and/or neglected children and children in the foster care system;
  6. homeless children and families;
  7. families who work non-traditional hours;
  8. children of workers employed in agricultural and seasonal industries;
  9. families with infants, toddlers, preschool-age, and school-age children;
  10. grandparent-headed families; and
  11. families and children living in rural areas of the United States.
2. **Impact of stabilization funds:** Understanding how the infusion of funding resulting from the COVID 19 stabilization funds have affected providers and the child care market, including retention and recruitment of the CCEE workforce, supply of CCEE that responds to the needs and preferences of families for CCEE post pandemic, financial viability of CCEE programs/providers to provide services to families, and availability of child care in different communities;
  3. **Impact of subsidy policy on equal access:** Understanding how the implementation of CCDF policies (e.g., family copayments, state payment rates, subsidy provisions) may be related to addressing inequities in the CCEE system and to equal access for all families;
  4. **Quality investments:** The focus and effectiveness of states' investments in quality of early care and education programs serving children and families who use subsidies;
  5. **Increasing supply:** Strategies to increase the supply of subsidized care for children in households with working parents;
  6. **Retaining qualified workforce:** Strategies to recruit, retain, and support a qualified child care workforce in specific states, including whether impacts are consistent across all programs and how providers and states are combatting inconsistent impacts based on whether programs accept subsidies.
  7. **Participation in subsidy program:** Understanding barriers and supports for providers' participation in subsidy program, and strategies to recruit and retain child care providers to participate in the child care subsidy program;
  8. **Impacts of different cost estimation approaches:** Understanding how payment rates based on different approaches to estimating costs (i.e., market rate, cost estimation data) relate to equity, access to, and quality of child care; and
  9. **Child care in tribal communities:** Issues related to child care in tribal communities, including maintaining culture, language, and traditions through intergenerational approaches to child care and coordination with states.

**Additionally, other areas of interest for this opportunity include (but are not limited to):**

1. Understanding how **consumer education** supports parents' child care selections and how states have implemented strategies to ensure equal access to information about child care by all families;

2. To what extent have states implemented policies to reduce the “**cliff effect**”, or the effect of losing subsidies when a family’s income increases above income eligibility for subsidy child care?
3. Issues and opportunities related to the **increased awareness of child care** as an important factor in the labor force and their effects on the field of child care;
4. Understanding the unique features of **home-based child care**, and how to increase the supply and quality of home-based child care;
5. Factors that play a role in **parents' decisions** about work, child care, and subsidy access;
6. Understanding **parents’ ideal work and child care preferences**, which may include options that are not available to them (e.g., flexible work schedules, part-time work, preferred child care setting in an area where that setting is not available);
7. Cost-effective investments (e.g., professional development interventions, child care environment improvement strategies, service coordination models) to **improve child care quality** in all settings;
8. Understanding the salient aspects of **coaching and training** in social-emotional learning that leads to changes in teachers’ behaviors and ultimately child outcomes;
9. Effectiveness of the **state program standards** and the effects on child outcomes to include but not limited to kindergarten readiness;
10. Understanding the required elements and feasibility of a **national, competency-based certification system** in an effort to increase child care provider quality as a separate path from Bachelor's (BA), Master's (MA), and Child Development Associate (CDA) certifications;
11. **Drivers of per-child cost escalations**, and innovations to mitigate per-child costs, such as private-public partnerships and shared services;
12. Issues and outcomes related to **early childhood workforce development** including the effects of existing efforts and of tying increased competencies, skills, and training to increased compensation;
13. Identifying and understanding **misalignment of policies** across child care and other early childhood programs and agencies that create unintended barriers to partnerships among early childhood systems and to families accessing support;
14. Analyses of state licensing and monitoring data to assess **reliability and validity of licensure practices** and to identify needed efficiencies in the system;
15. Effectiveness of **monitoring systems** in the context of licensing, Quality Rating and Improvement System ratings, and other benchmarking or accountability systems in the state to improve and maintain quality of early care and education services; and
16. Studies using **secondary data** to address questions of relevance to local CCDF programs and policies. Potential projects with secondary data include, but are not limited to:
  1. National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)
  2. National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES)
  3. National-level or state-level administrative and systems data (e.g., ACF-801 Monthly Child Care Data; CCDF Policies Database)
  4. State Workforce Registries; Data on Quality Ratings and Improvement Systems (QRIS); State Licensing and Program Monitoring Data

For further information about these datasets and their locations, please refer to the Child and Family Data Archive at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-and-family-data-archive-2018-2023> or the Early Childhood Data Sets listed at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/archived-data>

#### **D. Definitions (for the purpose of this opportunity)**

**Budget Period:** Each 12-month period of time for which funds are made available to a particular recipient.

**Recipient:** The eligible entity (e.g., the institute, university, or organization) that was awarded the grant for the project on behalf of the PI/Faculty Mentor.

**PI:** The faculty mentor of the doctoral-level graduate student.

**Project Period:** The total length of the proposed project, which is either 12 or 24 months. For a 1-year proposed project, the project period would start September 30, 2024, and end September 29, 2025. For a 2-year proposed project, the project period would start September 30, 2024, and end September 29, 2026.

**Scholar:** The doctoral-level graduate student who has designed and will execute the proposed dissertation project.

#### **E. Questions Regarding Applications**

For questions regarding this funding opportunity and/or the application process, please call 877-350-5913, or direct inquiries via email to OPRE Child Care Dissertation Grant Review at [CCScholarsGrants@icf.com](mailto:CCScholarsGrants@icf.com). Please note that no pre-application assistance can be given other than quoted information stated in this NOFO.

#### **F. Transferability**

The merit of the application and the award are associated with the support of a single graduate student, who is specified in the application. Awards may not be transferred to support any other graduate student.

Awards are not transferable to another organization or institution without prior written approval from ACF. In addition, award funds may not be used to support project activities outside the scope of the proposal for the awarded project without prior written approval by ACF.

#### **G. Sharing of Awards**

The awards are for support of an individual graduate student researcher. Awards cannot be divided among two or more students (i.e., no co-investigators).

#### **H. Indirect Costs**

If the applicant institution voluntarily relinquishes their indirect costs, or chooses to apply off-campus research rates, an authorized representative of the institution must submit a written acknowledgment that the indirect costs are being relinquished or a lower rate is being used. This voluntary decision to relinquish indirect costs, or to apply off-campus research rates, will not impact eligibility to submit an application and will not be a factor during merit review.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

### **Funding Instrument Type:**

G (Grant)

**Estimated Total Funding:**

\$150,000

**Expected Number of Awards:**

6

**Award Ceiling:**

\$25,000

Per Budget Period

**Award Floor:**

\$20,000

Per Budget Period

**Average Projected Award Amount:**

\$25,000

Per Budget Period

**Anticipated Project Start Date:**

09/30/2024

**Length of Project Periods:**

12-month project period and budget period

24-month project period with two 12-month budget periods

**Additional Information on Project Periods and Explanation of 'Other'**

As appropriate to the study design, please select a 12-month or 24-month project period.

**Additional Information on Awards:**

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

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

**Project Periods and Non-Competitive Continuation Awards**

Applicants conducting high-quality research, including research that involves primary data collection or secondary data analysis, using various quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies and designs, may apply for either a 12-month project period (with one budget period) or a 24-month project period (with two 12-month budget periods). Initial awards will be made for the first 12-month budget period. Applicants proposing a 12-month project period will be awarded up to \$25,000 for the 12-month budget period. Applicants proposing 24-month project periods will be awarded up to \$25,000 for the first 12-month budget period and up to \$25,000 for the second 12-month budget period, for a total not exceeding \$50,000 for the entire 24-month project period. ***The 12-month or 24-month project period should be noted in Item 17 on the Standard Form SF-424 and the need for a 12-month or 24-month project period must be identified in the project narrative, budget, and budget justification.***

For 24-month projects, non-competing continuation awards for the second 12-month budget period will be required and subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress by the recipient, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the federal government. Satisfactory project performance and progress is judged, in part, on information provided in your semi-annual progress reports. This includes adhering to the timeline for when you plan to complete the future activities (aligned with the written description of planned activities), and providing a detailed description of any changes in the activities and/or timeline from what was originally proposed. ***During the first budget period, applicants proposing 24-month projects will receive instructions on how to submit non-competing continuation applications to request funds for the second budget period.*** A second-year budget period will not be granted if the student has graduated by the end of the first-year budget period.

### **Indirect Costs**

Indirect Costs are included in the Award Ceiling and are taken into consideration under the Award Ceiling disqualification factor.

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **III.1. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants are public, private, and state controlled institutions of higher education; state, county, city or township, and special district governments; independent school districts; non-profit organizations; for-profit organizations; small businesses; Native American tribal governments and organizations; and public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities.

**The application must include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal by the application due date identified in this NOFO.**

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

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

### **Reference to Legal Status**

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

### **III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement:

No

**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.**

See *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification, Commitment of Non-Federal Resources* for more information.

### III.3. Other

Government agencies generally define plagiarism as the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit. Any suspected plagiarism will be reported to the applicant university and the HHS, Office of Inspector General for investigation.

**Approved Dissertation Proposal Disqualification Factor:** The application must include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal by the application due date identified in this NOFO. Please refer to *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation* for further details and guidance. **If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this NOFO.**

#### **Application Disqualification Factors**

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

#### **Award Ceiling Disqualification**

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

*Ceiling* listed for the project period.

### **Required Electronic Application Submission**

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

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

### **Missing the Application Deadline (Late Applications)**

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

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

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

### **Notification of Application Disqualification**

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

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### **IV.1. Address to Request Application Package**

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation  
Child Care Dissertation Grant Review  
c/o ICF International  
1902 Reston Metro Plaza  
Reston

VA  
20190  
1-877-350-5913  
703-934-3740  
CCScholarsGrants@icf.com

### **Application Packages**

#### **Electronic Application Submission:**

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

## **IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission**

### **FORMATTING APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS**

#### **Notice of Two-File Requirement**

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

#### ***FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:***

#### **Signature of Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)**

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

#### **Accepted Font Style and Size**

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

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

#### **English Language**

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

#### **Page Limitations**

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

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

### **Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements**

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

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

### **Adherence to NOFO Formatting, Font, and Page Limitation Requirements**

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

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

### **Corrections/Updates to Submitted Applications**

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

### **Copies Required**

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

### **Accepted Application Format**

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

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

### **PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:**

Each application may include only one proposed project, submitted in two files: The Project Description File (File 1) and the Appendices File (File 2).

**Page Limits.** The length of the *entire* application must be limited to 100 pages. This page limit applies to the combined length of the Project Description File and the Appendices File. The recommended page limit for each file is 50 pages. Pages submitted beyond the first 100 pages in the application will be removed prior to panel review. The required SF, assurances, and certifications are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices Files, and are not included in the 100-page limit.

**Organization of Files.** Pages in the Project Description File must be numbered, beginning with the Table of Contents. Throughout both files, applicants are strongly encouraged to use headings and subheadings that correspond to the required application sections (listed below and in *Section IV.2. The Project Description* and *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*). Additional headers and subheaders may be used to organize the content of each section. Clear headings must be used to ease reviewers' identification of information relevant to the application review criteria.

**Tables and Figures.** Applications may include tables and/or figures as needed to supplement, but not replace, the narrative components of their applications. Tables and figures count in the 100-page limit.

**Style Guideline.** The proposal and tables/figures must be consistent with the citation format and style guidelines of the current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The research must comply with the "Ethical Standards" detailed in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002).

The **Project Description File** must be carefully developed in accordance with ACF's research goals and agenda as described in *Section I. Program Description* and incorporate information related to the criteria that will be used to evaluate the application, as described in *Section V.1. Criteria*. We suggest organizing the Project Description File according to the sections presented below. See *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Approach* for additional instructions for preparing each section.

The **Project Description File** must include:

1. Table of Contents (includes a list of all pieces of the application being submitted across both files with corresponding page numbers)
2. Project Summary (one page maximum)
3. Approach
  1. Background, Significance, and Objectives
  2. Research Design and Methodology
  3. Collaborative Partner Plan
  4. Dissemination Plan
  5. Management Plan
  6. References
4. Budget and Budget Justification

The **Appendices File** must include the following components:

For items 1 through 9 see *Section IV.2. The Project Description* for additional guidance.

1. Letter of Support from:

- a. PI/Faculty Mentor
  - b. Collaborative Partners
  - c. Additional Letters of Support, if Applicable
2. Curriculum Vitae for:
    - a. PI/Faculty Mentor
    - b. Scholar
  3. Documentation of Approved Dissertation Proposal (*see Section IV.2. Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*)
  4. Proof of Non-profit or For-profit Status, if applicable (*see Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*)
  5. Organizational Capacity
  6. Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities
  7. Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
  8. Third-Party Agreements

#### **ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Formatting Submission Files**

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

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

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

### **Naming Application Submission Files**

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

### **Use only file formats supported by ACF**

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

### **ACF supports the following file formats:**

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

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

### **Do Not Encrypt or Password-Protect the Electronic Application Files**

If ACF cannot access submitted electronic files because they are encrypted or password protected, the affected file will not be reviewed. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make awards based on an incomplete application.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR PAPER APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS:**

You must receive an exemption in order for a paper application to be accepted for review. For more information on the exemption, see "[ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission](#)."

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

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

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

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

## Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

**Applicants seeking an award under this funding opportunity must submit the listed SFs, assurances, and certifications with the application.** All required SFs, assurances, and certifications are available in the Application Package posted for this NOFO at [Grants.gov](http://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 <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> . 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 <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html</a> .<br><br>General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/</a> . Applicants may also contact OHRP by email ( <a href="mailto:OHRP@HHS.gov">OHRP@HHS.gov</a> ) 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.<br><br>Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and   | See <i>Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)</i> for more information.  |

| Forms/Assurances/Certifications  | Submission Requirement  | Notes/Description   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p>project award period.</p> <p>Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: <a href="http://www.sam.gov">http://www.sam.gov</a></p> <p>.</p>  |   |
| 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 | <p>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.</p> <p>By signing and submitting the SF-424B, applicants are making the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes</p> | Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project. |

| Forms/Assurances/Certifications                    | Submission Requirement   | Notes/Description  |
|--|--|--|
|  | relating to nondiscrimination.   |  |
| SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL) | Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.   | Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.   |
| SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities         | If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it 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 Disclosures**

All applicants and recipients are required to submit, in writing, to ACF and 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](mailto:grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov)

### **SF-424 Key Contact Form:**

Use the form to provide contact information for the PI/Faculty Mentor, student, and the Authorized Organizational Representative.

### **Proprietary Information and Personally Identifiable Information (PII)**

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

## **The Project Description**

### **The Project Description Overview**

#### **General Expectations and Instructions**

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

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

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

#### **Letter of Intent**

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

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

Submit the Letter of Intent to the following address:

Child Care Dissertation Grant Review Team

c/o ICF International

1902 Reston Metro Plaza, Reston, VA 20190

Email (preferred): [CCScholarsGrants@icf.com](mailto:CCScholarsGrants@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 project description. The summary must include a brief description of the applicant's proposed project including the needs to be addressed, the proposed activities or services, and if applicable, the population group(s) to be served. The summary must be clear, accurate, concise, and without cross-references to other parts of the application. Please place the following at the top of the Project Summary:

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

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

## **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).

### **Small Businesses**

Small businesses must submit a certification signed by the chief executive officer or designee that states that the entity qualifies as a small business under 13 CFR §§ 121.101- 121.201.

### **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.

As described in *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*, the following documents must be included in the **Appendices File**:

#### **1. Letters of Support.**

1. Letter(s) of Support from PI/Faculty Mentor. As PI, the scholar's mentor must submit a letter of support stating that he/she approves the application and describing how he/she will regularly monitor the scholar's work. In addition, the letter must verify: (a) the scholar's status in the doctoral program, (b) that the award will be used to fund the scholar's original dissertation research, and (c) that the scholar is within 2 years or less of completing his/her dissertation.
  2. Letter(s) of Support from the Collaborative Partner(s). The graduate student must have an established collaborative partnership with a CCDF agency or administrator. This partnership must be evidenced by a Letter of Support from the CCDF agency or administrator that documents: (a) their support of the proposed research, (b) their anticipated role in the project moving forward, and (c) how the proposed research will be informative to them. If the student proposes working with child care, Head Start, or Early Head Start program(s), they must include a letter from each program to provide evidence of their support of the project. See *Section I.B. Goals and Requirements of the Child Care Dissertation Grants* and *Section IV.2. The Project Description* for additional details on expectations for collaborative partnerships.
  3. Additional Letters of Support, if applicable. If the primary faculty mentor does not have the necessary expertise to support and inform the proposed work or if the graduate student would like additional guidance from an expert, the graduate student may engage additional research advisors to contribute to supporting the completion of the proposed project. All proposed research advisors, mentors, or partners should supply a letter of support indicating their intention to participate and their responsibilities on the proposed project.
- #### **2. Curriculum Vitae.**
3. Curriculum Vitae for PI/Mentor. The scholar's mentor must submit a curriculum vitae documenting that he/she has a Ph.D. or equivalent; conducts research as a primary professional responsibility; has published or has been accepted for publication in major peer-reviewed research journals as a first or second author; and has managed projects of similar content and scope, including experience working with child care programs and

populations and/or, if applicable, culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations as indicated in his/her curriculum vitae.

4. Curriculum Vitae for Scholar. The scholar must submit a current curriculum vitae that demonstrates that they have the relevant background, experience, and training to carry out the proposed activities.

### 3. Documentation of Approved Dissertation Proposal.

ACF must receive sufficient evidence of an approved dissertation proposal at the time of application deadline identified in this NOFO. If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. Sufficient evidence of an approved dissertation proposal includes a written confirmation signed by committee member (s) or another departmental administrator attesting to the fact that the dissertation proposal has been officially approved by the university/department (or equivalent). Alternatively, a form or letter from the mentor or department lead describing completion of other processes that are equivalent to establishing this pre-doctoral status would suffice. This documentation must be submitted with the application by the application deadline identified on this NOFO.

### 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.

**A. Background, Significance, and Objectives.** Applications must include a review of relevant literature, an outline and justification of the objective(s) of the proposed project, and a demonstration of the overall significance of the proposal to CCDF research, programs, and policies. Applications must incorporate the following components:

1. **Literature review.** Applications must include a review of relevant literature that identifies gaps in current knowledge and justifies the proposed study.
2. **Theoretical framework.** The application must present the underlying theoretical framework relevant to the type of study or research design.
3. **Research questions and hypotheses.** The application must identify the key research questions and related hypotheses as applicable to the research design and study questions.
4. **Significance and implications.** Applications must demonstrate how the study will address issues of significance to CCDF policies, as well as how it will address key gaps in the field of early care and education. To this end, applications must describe.
  1. How the proposed project will build upon existing knowledge and contribute to our understanding of current and/or future CCDF programs/policies or populations served;
  2. How the proposed project relates to CCDF program goals and addresses important issues in the CCDF and early care and education field (*see Section I.C. Priority Topics for this Opportunity for priority topics*);
  3. The proposed project's significance to policymakers, program administrators, and/or practitioners in early care and education settings; and

4. How the expected results apply to the populations/communities involved in the proposed project.
5. How the proposed project will incorporate an equity lens or consider equity in the relevant components of the project, such as the proposed research questions, design, analysis and interpretation and approach. If the proposed project is not expected to address equity, provide a justification for why. For example, discuss why it is not appropriate or feasible for the planned research questions, data sources, or methods to incorporate an equity and lens.

**B. Research Design and Methodology.** Applications may propose new data collection, analysis of existing secondary data, or a combination of both. The proposed research approach must demonstrate a study design, methods, and procedures that are appropriate for addressing the goals of the project. The proposed approach should address the objectives and research questions. For all research designs and methodologies, the application must describe the following:

1. **Constructs.** Identify and define the key constructs.
2. **Measures.** Describe how the key constructs will be (or were) measured, including psychometric properties of all instruments, as applicable. If secondary analysis is proposed, in addition to the information above, the plan must identify the variables or data elements to be used.
3. **Sample.** Describe a sampling plan that defines the study population, describes the expected sample, and details how the sample will be (or was) chosen and recruited. The sampling plan must consider demographic, cultural, or contextual factors that would be relevant to the research questions and/or the population of interest.
4. **Data Collection.** Describe the proposed data collection procedure. The approach must include how the scholar will gain access to the necessary organizations, participants, and/or data sources. If secondary analysis is proposed, the plan must describe how the original data were collected and how the researcher will gain access to the data.
5. **Data Analysis Plan.** Describe the proposed analytical approaches and statistical techniques. The data analytic plan must describe the results of power analyses when appropriate. Citations justifying anticipated effect sizes are encouraged.
6. **Human Subjects and Data Protection.** Describe the procedures for ensuring adequate protection of human subjects, including consent procedures and a plan to protect confidentiality and security of all data. These procedures must be aligned with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2002). The presence of oversight must be confirmed by the Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance Identification/Institutional Review Board Certification/Declaration of Exemption form.
7. **Sensitivity.** Across methods, analyses, and research translation and dissemination plans, demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural, technical, logistical, and ethical issues of working in a community setting; working in partnership with CCDF program staff and/or families and children; and working with a culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse population and/or working with data regarding those populations and settings. If investigating demographic differences, examine how linguistic, ethnic, and racial categories may intersect with sociocultural dynamics

8. **Scholarly Independence.** Provide evidence that the proposed dissertation research project is either an independent study designed and conducted by the student or a well-defined portion of a larger study being conducted by the PI/faculty mentor or another faculty member holding a senior research position. If the proposed project is part of a larger study designed by others, the application must clearly delineate the research questions and each feature of the Research Design and Methodology that will be carried out by the scholar and how they are distinguished from the larger research project.
9. **Potential Challenges.** Describe any potential challenges, such as limitations of the proposed sample, data sources, and/or measures, as well as how these challenges might be addressed. Any potential challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic must be clearly outlined and addressed in the proposal. If the project will not be impacted by COVID-19 challenges, this also should be specified in the proposal.

**C. Collaborative Partner Plan.** The application must demonstrate an established collaborative partnership with a CCDF agency or administrator. All applicants are required to have a collaborative partnership with a CCDF agency or administrator, regardless of whether the project proposes new data collection or secondary data analysis. CCDF partners may be situated at the state or local level, but must be an appropriate partner to collaborate and support the proposed research. Partners must be involved in policy and/or policy relevant work; child care providers alone are not appropriate partners for the purposes of this project. The application must outline how the applicant plans to consult and/or collaborate with their partners throughout the course of the project to ensure that: (1) the project is relevant to the CCDF program, its policies and stakeholders, and the populations served; (2) the collaboration benefits both the proposed work and the collaborative partners; and (3) the proposed collaboration seems viable and sustainable for the course of the project. At a minimum, applicants must detail how their collaborative partners were engaged or consulted in the development and refinement of the research questions and how they will be involved during the interpretation and dissemination of findings. Additionally, applicants must be thoughtful about the best times and strategies for involving their partners, taking into consideration their research questions and design, the nature/context of their partnership, and when consultation with their partners would inform the quality or reach of the proposed work.

**D. Dissemination Plan.** The application must articulate how the project's findings will be disseminated to a wide audience (e.g., a research audience, policymakers, practitioners, and collaborative partners) using research, practice, and policy-oriented products and dissemination channels. In addition to traditional research products and dissemination channels (e.g., conference presentations, journal publications), the dissemination plan must include the development of products (e.g., presentations, research briefs, practitioner-focused articles) tailored to policymakers and/or practitioners (e.g., program administrators, local program directors, teachers, staff). Dissemination products must be developed in collaboration with partners. Scholars are required to attend two conferences and the annual Early Care and Education Scholars Grant Recipient Meeting each year. The dissemination plan must outline the conferences and meetings where the scholar plans to disseminate findings. The applicant should include their plan for consulting with the Federal Program Officer and the Child and Family Data Archive early within the project's period of performance to assess their projects and review considerations for data archiving (see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-and-family->

[data-archive-2018-2023](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/valueadded.pdf) for information about data archiving). Please refer to the Value-Added Research Dissemination Framework for additional guidance:  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/valueadded.pdf>

**E. Management Plan.** The application must outline a management plan that describes a plan of action for how the proposed project will be carried out. This section must describe how the faculty mentor, scholar, and any other research advisors will communicate and maintain quality control over the implementation and ongoing operations for the study, in order to keep the project on track, ethically appropriate, and within budget. The plan must clearly define each member of the team and their role in the proposed project. The plan must outline how the faculty mentor will provide guidance and mentor the scholar, including information related to how often mentoring meetings will occur during different phases of the project and strategies for how the mentor will support consultation/collaboration with collaborative partner(s). If the scholar is engaging additional research advisors, these individuals and their role in contributing to and managing the project must be detailed and evidenced by letters of support. Students whose work involves secondary analysis of large data sets are encouraged to confer with one or more senior investigators on the original project, if possible. A detailed monthly timeline must also be included, outlining milestones for completion of the various project tasks in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. The timeline must include when the expected completion of the research project will occur, as well as when the findings will be disseminated to a wider audience. The timeline may be presented in a Gantt Chart, if appropriate. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

**F. References.** Applications must include a list of references for all sources that are cited within the application. References must be formatted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

### **Organizational Capacity**

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

- Curricula Vitae (CV).
- 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.

### **Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities**

Recipients are required to ensure proper oversight in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D.

These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

- Financial and Program Management

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

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

### **Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information**

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

### **Third-Party Agreements**

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

### **Letters of Support**

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

## **The Project Budget and Budget Justification**

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

SF. Applicants must indicate the method they are selecting for their indirect cost rate. See Indirect Charges for further information.

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

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

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

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

The following costs must be included in the budget and budget justification:

1. Expenses directly related to the student's dissertation research, which may include personnel costs/salary of the student, travel of the student, and other directly related expenses, such as the costs of data collection and incentive payments to participants. The budget may not include funds for activities that have already been completed or the salary for the student's faculty mentor.
2. Expenses related to travel (e.g., transportation, lodging, subsistence) for the student to attend the required meetings and conferences outlined in *Section I.B. Goals and Requirements of the Child Care Dissertation Grants*.
3. If necessary, expenses (e.g., transportation, lodging, subsistence) to enable the faculty mentor to participate in the required meetings in Washington, DC, must be included.

Both federal and non-federal resources (when required) must be detailed and justified in the budget and budget narrative justification. "Federal resources" refers only to the ACF award funds for which you are applying. "Non-federal resources" are all other non-ACF federal and non-federal resources. It is suggested that budget amounts and computations be presented in a columnar format: first column, object class categories; second column, federal budget; next column(s), non-federal budget(s); and last column, total budget. The budget justification must be

in a narrative form and must explain each amount presented in the table columns. Each amount must be linked to proposed activities in the project narrative

## **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 because those costs should be listed under the "Contractual" category as part of the total value of the contract or agreement.

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

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

## **Travel**

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

**Justification:** For each trip show: the total number of travelers; travel destination; duration of trip; per diem; mileage allowances, if privately owned vehicles will be used to travel out of town; and other transportation costs and subsistence allowances. If appropriate for this project, travel

costs for key project staff to attend ACF-sponsored workshops/conferences/recipient orientations should be detailed in the budget justification.

## **Equipment**

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

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

## **Supplies**

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

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

## **Contractual**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Other**

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

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

**If applicable and charged as a direct cost, include** depreciation by real property address for each building, facility, administrative office, structure, land, and other real property proposed for use and depreciation of equipment proposed for use. For each real property owned by the recipient or less-than-arms-length lease intended to be proposed or claimed for use provide, if applicable, and in accordance with 45 CFR §§75.436 and 75.465: the allocable percentage and

total dollar amount; the depreciation amount with type of method and calculation used; tax amount; insurance amount and what it covers; maintenance and repair amounts with details on each type of expense proposed and its associated cost; minor A&R with specifics for each type of proposed expense and its associated cost; the ownership type (e.g., owned, leased, or intent to lease); show the computation and provide other information that supports the amount requested. For more information, please see [ACF Property Guidance](#). **Do not include** costs of third-party renting or leasing real property and equipment because those costs should be under the “Contractual” category.

## Indirect Charges

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

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

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

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

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

## Commitment of Non-Federal Resources

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Paperwork Reduction Act Disclaimer**

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

## **Application Submission Options**

Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

### **Electronic Delivery**

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

### **How to Register through Grants.gov**

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

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

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

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://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:** 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 into Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

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

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

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

### **Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission**

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

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

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

### **Issues with Federal Systems**

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

### **Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission**

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

### **Paper Application Submission**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **IV.4. Submission Dates and Times**

### **Due Date for Letter of Intent**

Due Date for Letter of Intent 04/16/2024

04/16/2024

05/16/2024

### **Due Dates for Applications**

05/16/2024

### **Due Date for Applications:**

FY2024: 5/16/2024

FY2025: 5/15/2025

## **Explanation of Due Dates**

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

### **Electronic Applications**

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

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

### **Mailed Paper Applications**

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

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

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

### **Emergency Extensions**

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

## Acknowledgement of Received Application

### Acknowledgement from Grants.gov

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

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

### Acknowledgement from ACF of an electronic application's submission:

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

### Acknowledgement from ACF of receipt of a paper application:

ACF will not provide acknowledgement of receipt of hard copy application packages submitted via mail.

## 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)

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

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

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

## IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

Submit paper applications to the following address.

### Submission by Mail

Bridget  
Shea Westfall  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Grants Management  
330 C Street SW  
Washington, DC  
DC  
20024

## V. Application Review Information

### V.1. Criteria

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

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

Application components must be organized such that a reviewer will be able to follow a seamless and logical flow of information (i.e., from a broad overview of the project to more detailed information about how it will be conducted). In addition, it is recommended that the application be carefully labeled to ease reviewers' identification of information relevant to the review criteria.

### APPROACH, BACKGROUND, SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES

**Maximum Points: 25**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The background section is clearly written and logically organized.
2. The application contains a *current and comprehensive review of the relevant literature*. The application identifies gaps in existing knowledge and strongly motivates the need and objectives for the study.

3. The application includes an *appropriate theoretical framework* that is consistent with the reviewed literature, the project's research questions and any proposed hypotheses.
4. The application outlines clear and specific research questions and, if appropriate, hypotheses that are reasonable and well-justified by the study's theoretical framework, extant evidence, and research gaps.
5. The application clearly addresses issues of significance relevant to: (1) the broader field of early care and education, and (2) to current and/or future CCDF populations served, programs, and/or policies.
6. The application includes reference citations that are complete and consistent with the most current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
7. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application provides a thoughtful discussion of how the proposed project incorporates an equity lens. See Section I Program Description for further information.

#### **APPROACH, RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**Maximum Points: 35**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application clearly defines and appropriately links the research questions, design/methods, sample, key constructs, (or phenomena of interest for qualitative research), measures/data sources, and analytic approach.
2. The proposed research approach employs technically sound and rigorous design, methods, and procedures that are appropriate for thoroughly addressing the goals of the project. Research design is appropriate to the state of the field for the given research questions and the state of knowledge and understanding of the constructs.
3. The proposed research approach is appropriate and sufficient to address the proposed objectives and research questions.
4. The application demonstrates that the measures and/or qualitative data collection tools are appropriate for the proposed constructs and/or phenomena of interest, research questions, and the population to be studied. If secondary data analysis is proposed, the design, variables, and data elements to be used are clearly identified and validly represent the constructs proposed.
  - a. For quantitative methods, the application describes the psychometric properties (e.g., validity, reliability) of all measures, both for primary and secondary data analyses, or a sufficient plan to conduct psychometric analyses if not yet available.

b. For qualitative methods, the application describes how the data collection tools will be (or have been) developed, tested, and refined with sufficient detail about data collection procedures.

5. The application describes a feasible and appropriate sampling plan that clearly defines the study population, describes the expected sample, and details how the sample will be (or was) chosen and recruited. The sampling plan must consider demographic or contextual factors that would be relevant to the research questions and/or the population of interest.

6. The application thoroughly demonstrates an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural, technical, logistical, and ethical issues of working in a community setting; working in partnership with CCDF program staff and/or families; and, if applicable, working with culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations.

a. If examining issues of demographic differences (i.e., language, ethnicity, race), the application goes beyond simply recording linguistic, ethnic, and racial categories to provide a more thorough examination of how these groupings intersect with important sociocultural dynamics such as social position, immigration status, family practices, or parental goals for socialization.

7. The application clearly describes a feasible plan for data collection, including how the scholar will gain access to the necessary organizations, participants, and/or data sources needed for the project. Additionally, the application clearly demonstrates how the data collection approach will result in data that appropriately address the research questions.

a. If secondary analysis is proposed, the application thoroughly describes the original data source and collection, how the scholar will gain access to the original data files, and convincingly explains how data drawn with these methods is likely to provide answers to the proposed research questions.

8. The application confirms that the proposed project was developed and designed by the graduate student. If the proposed project is part of a larger study designed by others, the application clearly delineates the student's leading role in refining the research questions, methods, and analyses plan, and their planned leadership role in implementing the study. The application clearly explains how the proposed research project is a distinct, delineated project within the larger research study.

9. The application adequately describes potential challenges, such as limitations with the proposed sample, data sources, and/or measures, as well as how these challenges might be addressed. If relevant, the application clearly outlines and addresses potential challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. If the project will not be impacted by COVID-19 challenges, this also should be specified.

10. The application contains a comprehensive data analytic plan that is well-described and is appropriate for each research question(s) under consideration, as well as for the types of data to be analyzed (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). For quantitative analyses, the applicant will provide a power analyses or justification to validate the sample size (ie., sufficient to detect effects using the proposed analytic methods) for the planned analysis. For qualitative analyses, the application identifies a minimum sampling size to sufficiently address the research question(s) (e.g., to identify clear themes, reach data saturation). For mixed methods, the application includes a clear and justified approach to integrating qualitative and quantitative data to address the research question(s).

11. The application provides adequate protection of human subjects, including confidentiality of data and informed consent procedures, as defined by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2002), and confirms an Internal Review Board through the Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance Identification/Institutional Review Board Certification/Declaration of Exemption form.

#### **APPROACH, COLLABORATIVE PARTNER PLAN**

**Maximum Points: 10**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application details a reasonable, well-justified, and thoughtful approach regarding when and how to engage collaborative partners throughout the course of the project.

- a. At a minimum, the application describes, in sufficient detail, how the applicant has consulted or collaborated with CCDF agencies or administrators in the development and refinement of the research questions and will consult or collaborate with CCDF agencies or administrators in the interpretation and dissemination of the findings.
- b. The planned collaboration is sufficient to ensure that: (1) the project is relevant to the CCDF program, policies, stakeholders, and the populations served; and (2) that the collaboration benefits both the proposed work and the collaborative partners.
- c. The proposed collaboration seems viable and sustainable for the course of the project.

2. The application includes a letter of support from the CCDF agency or administrator as evidence of a collaborative partnership.

#### **APPROACH, DISSEMINATION PLAN**

**Maximum Points: 5**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application describes a reasonable and appropriate plan for disseminating findings to a research audience. The proposed products and activities are appropriate for a research audience.

2. The application describes a reasonable and appropriate plan for disseminating findings to policymakers, practitioners, and collaborative partners (e.g., CCDF agency or administrator(s)),

and communities of interest. The proposed products and activities are appropriately tailored for policy and practice audiences.

3. The application clearly outlines the conferences and meetings where the scholar plans to disseminate findings.

**APPROACH, MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Maximum Points: 5**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application includes a sound management plan that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each team member, including the faculty mentor, the student, the collaborative partners, and any additional research advisors. The application fully describes how project tasks will be carried out and by whom. The application also presents clearly defined approaches for how the student and faculty mentor will work together to keep the project on track and within budget, ensure accurate and on-time reporting, and ensure quality end products.

2. The application clearly demonstrates how the faculty mentor will support the student across the different phases of the project, including a description of when and how often meetings between the mentor and student will occur, as well as a description of how the faculty mentor will support the student in working with the collaborative partner(s) and in completing the research.

3. The application provides a clear and detailed timeline with benchmarks indicating when project activities will be conducted and completed and when the entire project is expected to be finished. The timeline includes feasible markers for developing drafts, reviewing and refining end products, and disseminating findings to relevant audiences.

**APPROACH, ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, QUALIFICATIONS**

**Maximum Points: 10**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application clearly demonstrates that the scholar:

- a. possesses the relevant background, experience, and training to carry out the proposed activities; and
- b. has completed graduate coursework and is at the dissertation level.

2. The application clearly demonstrates that the faculty mentor:

- a. possesses the research expertise, including relevant background, experience, and training on related research or similar projects necessary to conduct the study;
- b. has earned a doctorate or equivalent in a relevant field, conducts research as a primary professional responsibility, and has first or second author peer-reviewed publications; and
- c. demonstrates prior experience working with CCDF programs, and/or, if applicable, culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations. If the primary faculty mentor

does not have the necessary expertise to support and inform this work, the application includes additional research advisors who have this expertise to contribute to supporting the proposed project.

3. The application demonstrates that the applicant organization has a successful history of research and budget oversight, as well as a history of awarding advanced degrees.

## **BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**Maximum Points: 10**

Reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application includes a detailed budget with itemized expenses for the project and a detailed narrative budget justification that clearly explains all assumptions and calculations.
2. The proposed project costs (e.g., required personnel costs/salary, travel, and other directly related expenses) are reasonable and sufficient to support the proposed dissertation research. Proposed costs are appropriately allocated to accomplish the research objectives, design, and dissemination plan. All costs can be clearly linked to their respective proposed activities in the project narrative. Budgeted funds are justified according to the needs and time frame for carrying out the proposed project.
3. The budget includes adequate funds for the student and (if necessary) for his/her mentor to participate in the two required conferences and the recipient meeting, annually.

## **V.2. Review and Selection Process**

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

### **Initial ACF Screening**

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

### **Merit Review and Results**

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

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

pre-award decisions.

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

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

The competitive review will be conducted by panels of non-federal and federal expert reviewers knowledgeable in the areas of CCDF programmatic and policy issues, and early care and education research and evaluation. Reviewers will use the evaluation criteria listed in *Section V.1. Criteria* to review and score the application. OPRE will conduct an administrative review of the applications and results of the competitive review panels and will make recommendations for funding to the Director of OPRE, taking into account the goals of the Child Care Dissertation Grants as listed in *Section I. Program Description*. On the basis of the review of an application, ACF will: (a) approve the application for funding; (b) disapprove the application; or (c) approve the application but not fund it due to lack of funds or a need for further review.

Applications may be funded in whole or in part depending on: (1) the ranked order of applicants resulting from the competitive review; (2) the staff review and consultations; (3) the availability of funding; and (4) the best interests of the federal government.

### **Dissertation Proposal Approval Requirement**

ACF must receive sufficient evidence of an approved dissertation proposal at the time of the application deadline identified in this NOFO. If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. See *Section IV.2. Additional Eligibility Documentation*.

### **Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants**

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

### **Approved but Unfunded Applications**

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

## **V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

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

## **VI. Federal Award Administration Information**

### **VI.1. Federal Award Notices**

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

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

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

### **VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **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](http://www.ecfr.gov). Unless otherwise noted in this section, administrative and national policy requirements that are applicable to discretionary awards are available at: [www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements).

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

#### **HHS Grants Policy Statement**

ACF awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS), which covers basic award processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as

well as important agency-specific requirements. The HHS GPS is available at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/grants/grants/policies-regulations/hhsgps107.pdf>.

### **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).

## **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 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/manage-grant/reporting>.

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

Financial Reports:

Semi-Annually

## **VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s)**

### **Program Office Contact**

Ann

Rivera

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Child Care Dissertation Grant Review

c/o ICF International  
1902 Reston Metro Plaza  
Reston  
VA  
20190  
1-877-350-5913  
703-934-3740  
CCScholarsGrants@icf.com

### **Office of Grants Management Contact**

Bridget  
Shea Westfall  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Grants Management  
330 C Street, SW.  
Washington  
DC  
20201  
202-401-5542  
bridget.sheawestfall@acf.hhs.gov

## **VIII. Other Information**

### **Reference Websites**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [www.hhs.gov/](http://www.hhs.gov/).  
Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [www.acf.hhs.gov/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/).  
ACF Funding Opportunities Forecasts and NOFOs [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/).  
ACF "Applying for an ACF Award" <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant>.  
ACF Property Guidance <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/real-property-and-tangible-personal-property>  
Grants.gov Accessibility Information [www.grants.gov/web/grants/accessibility-compliance.html](http://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/>.  
CCDF State Agency Contact Information <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts>  
CCDF Reports to Congress <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/reports-to-congress>  
Child and Family Data Archive <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-and-family-data-archive-2018-2023>  
Early Childhood Datasets List <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/topic/overview/archived->

[data](#)

OCC Resource Library <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource-library>

## 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 <i>Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> . See <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html</a> for additional information.<br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> | Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> . 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 <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> .<br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> in the Mandatory section.  | Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .  |
| Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.                                 | Referenced in <i>Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)</i> in the funding opportunity.<br><br>To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to <a href="http://www.sam.gov">http://www.sam.gov</a> .   | A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants.<br><br>Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.   |
| SF-424 Key Contact Form  | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> .<br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> .  | Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .   |

| What to Submit  | Where Found   | When to Submit  |
|---|---|---|
| Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)   | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i><br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> .  | 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 <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i><br><br>These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> 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 <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>  |
| SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)  | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i><br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> .  | Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>  |
| SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities  | "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i><br><br>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> .  | If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application.<br><br>If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant. |
| Letter of Intent  | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Project Description.</i>   | Submission is due by the Letter of Intent due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4.</i>   |
| Table of Contents   | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description.</i>   | Submit with the application by the due date found in the  |

| What to Submit  | Where Found   | When to Submit  |
|---|---|---|
|   |   | <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .  |
| Proof of Non-Profit Status                            | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity</i> .  | Proof of non-profit status should be submitted with the application package by the application due date and time listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4.</i> of the NOFO.<br><br>If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant. |
| The Project Budget and Budget Justification           | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification</i> .  | Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C.<br><br>Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .  |
| Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (IDR)                    | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification</i> .<br><br>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.<br><br>If it is not available by the application due date, listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> , it may be submitted prior to the award of a grant.     |
| The Project Description                               | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .  | Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .   |
| Eligibility Documentation by For-Profit Organizations | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity</i> .  | Submission is required with the application by the Application Due Date in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .   |

| <b>What to Submit</b>                                    | <b>Where Found</b>   | <b>When to Submit</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| Project Summary/Abstract                                 | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .<br>The Project Summary/Abstract is limited to one single-spaced page. | Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> . |
| Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor                    | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .   | Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .           |
| Curricula Vitae for Student and Faculty Mentor           | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .   | Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .           |
| Documentation of Approved Doctoral Dissertation Proposal | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .   | Submission due by due date found in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation</i> .            |
| Letter(s) of Support from the Collaborative Partner(s)   | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .   | Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .           |
| Additional Letters of Support, if applicable             | Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .   | Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .           |