



Administration for Children and Families

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Grants

HHS-2024-ACF-OPRE-YE-0080

Application Due Date: 07/08/2024

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Funding Opportunity Title:

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Grants

Announcement Type:

Initial

Funding Opportunity Number:

HHS-2024-ACF-OPRE-YE-0080

Assistance Listing Number:

93.575

Due Date for Applications:

07/08/2024

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), within the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), invites applications for cooperative agreements under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity: Planning Grants (Phase I). These projects are meant to support partnerships between CCDF Lead Agencies and researchers to develop and improve state, territory, and tribal data systems and build the capacity of CCDF Lead Agencies to collect, analyze, and use data to guide child care policy decisions and program improvement efforts. Sponsored projects will work in collaboration to: (1) assess the current data and research capacity of the CCDF Lead Agency; (2) develop questions of interest to investigate state, territory, and tribal child care policies and practices; (3) develop logic models to identify the data needed to address the questions of interest; (4) identify data sources available to answer questions of interest and assess the accessibility of those data; (5) identify possible data sources from other state, territory, tribal, and local data systems for linking; (6) determine whether there is a need to collect data to answer policy-relevant questions; and (7) address the barriers to collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform child care policy decisions. These projects are intended to build the capacity of CCDF Lead Agencies to use data, including data on children, families, the workforce, and providers that participate in the child care subsidy system, to make data-informed decisions to improve child care policies and practices.

These 18-month projects, with one project and budget period, will fund a planning phase to develop a research plan to address questions of interest to the CCDF Lead Agency, including a plan for identifying, linking, and using state, territory, and tribal data to inform child care policy decisions. These planning projects may be followed by a second competition (Phase II), under a

separate NOFO, to support execution of the research plans to develop and improve state, territory, and tribal data systems. Projects must be conducted through partnerships between CCDF Lead Agencies (i.e., states, territories, Tribes, or local subsidy administering agencies) and researchers from institutions of higher education, within the state agency, research organizations, and/or other organizations with proven expertise conducting policy research. Applications are invited from CCDF Lead Agencies, institutions of higher education, research organizations, and other organizations with proven expertise conducting policy research. The research supported by this program should be collaborative from start to finish. The CCDF Lead Agency and their research partners must work together to assess the current data and research capacity of the CCDF Lead Agency and develop a feasible plan for identifying, linking, and using data to address questions of relevance to the CCDF Lead Agency.

Sponsored projects will be expected to participate in a consortium that will meet and communicate regularly to identify opportunities for coordination, such as to share information on facilitators and barriers to identifying and using data to inform child care policies and methods for linking data across systems, and to develop collective expertise and resources for the field. The Consortium's collaboration will support research capacity and learning within individual projects and across award recipients. Funding is subject to availability of funds and the best interests of the federal government.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority

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

Description

A. Background

CCDF is a federal block grant program administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) within ACF dedicated to supporting the employment and economic self-sufficiency of low-income working parents by providing access to affordable, high-quality child care that meets health and safety requirements and supports child development. CCDF is authorized by the CCDBG Act of 2014 (codified at 42 U.S.C. 9857 *et seq.*) and Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 618). CCDF is the primary federal funding source for child care subsidies to help eligible working families with low incomes access child care and to improve the quality of child care for all children. As a block grant, CCDF gives funding to states, territories, and Tribes to provide child care subsidies through grants and contracts with providers, as well as vouchers or certificates to families. CCDF Lead Agencies are identified by each state and given the authority to administer the CCDF program and may include one agency, or a joint interagency office, at the state, territory, or tribal level. CCDF promotes children's healthy development and learning by supporting child care licensing and Quality Improvement Systems (QIS) and by supporting child care professionals to attain more training and education.

To facilitate CCDF services, OCC establishes and oversees the implementation of child care policies and provides guidance and technical assistance to states, territories, and tribal governments as they administer CCDF programs. The CCDF funding reserved for research is intended to help child care decision-makers in crafting policies and initiatives that support positive outcomes for providers, the workforce, families, and children; to increase the capacity

for child care research at the national, state, and local levels; and to promote linkages among research, policy, and practice. To date, these funds have supported research efforts that have increased our knowledge about the efficacy of child care subsidy policies and programs in enhancing employment and economic self-sufficiency of families with low incomes and in improving quality in child care and early education settings to support learning and development of children. Descriptions of current and past research projects funded with these research set aside funds can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/topic/overview/child-care>.

B. Program Goals and Requirements

The purpose of the CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award Program is to support partnerships between CCDF Lead Agencies and researchers to:

- develop and improve state, territory, and tribal data systems; and
- build the capacity of CCDF Lead Agencies to collect, analyze, and use data (particularly data on children, families, the workforce, and providers that participate in the child care subsidy system) to guide child care policy decisions and program improvement efforts.

The CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award Program will be broken up into two phases. In Phase I (the planning grant funded under the current NOFO), award recipients will produce a research plan that aims to develop and improve state, territory, and tribal data systems that can be used by the CCDF Lead Agency to answer policy-relevant questions of interest. Phase II (the implementation grant, which would be funded under a separate NOFO) will include the implementation of the research plan that is developed under Phase I. It is expected that by the end of the project period, award recipients would be able to submit a competitive application for funding of the implementation of their research plan (in Phase II grants). Please note the following: submitting an application to Phase II does not guarantee funding.

Project Teams will include a state, territory, or Tribal CCDF Lead Agency and a research partner from an institution of higher education, within the state agency, a research organization, and/or an organization with demonstrated capacity to conduct rigorous policy research. The Project Team will:

- work collaboratively throughout all phases of the project to identify questions of interest to the CCDF Lead Agency that are relevant to local, state, and national child care policies;
- identify the data needed to address policy-relevant questions; and
- work with a cohort of other funded award recipients to participate in peer learning, identify opportunities for coordination, and develop collective expertise and resources for the field.

Goal 1. To develop research plans to address policy-relevant questions of interest to the CCDF Lead Agency and identify the data needed to address those policy-relevant questions with the overall goal of improving state, territory, and/or tribal data systems.

Funded projects will develop research plans to help build and improve state, territory, and tribal data systems and the use of data for child care policy decisions and to develop or improve data linkages with other state, territory, tribal, or local data systems.

The Project Team will begin with an assessment of its current data systems and research needs and develop a research plan for developing, linking, and improving relevant data systems. Specifically, the Project Team will work in collaboration to:

1. assess the current data and research capacity of the CCDF Lead Agency;
2. develop questions of interest to investigate state, territory, and tribal child care policies and practices;
3. develop logic models to identify the data needed to address the questions of interest;
4. identify data sources available to answer questions of interest and assess the accessibility of those data;
5. identify possible data sources from other state, territory, tribal, and local data systems for linking;
6. determine whether there is a need to collect data to answer policy-relevant questions; and
7. address the barriers to collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform child care policy decisions.

Each project will develop research plans to answer the following key questions:

- What is the current data and research capacity of the CCDF Lead Agency, and what methods will be used to build their data and research capacity?
- What data sources do CCDF Lead Agencies have available to inform child care policies and practices?
- What data sources are available from other state, territory, tribal, and local data systems for linking to help inform child care policy decisions and program improvement efforts?
- What data is needed to answer key questions of interest to CCDF Lead Agencies?
- What are the barriers to collecting, analyzing, and using data to guide policy decisions?

Key data sources that are of significant interest to ACF include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Child Care and Early Education (CCEE) provider and workforce data
- Data on supply, demand, and access of child care for families
- Data on comprehensive services provided to children and their families

Goal 2: To develop research partnerships that support collaboration among CCDF Lead Agencies and child care researchers in order to build the capacity of CCDF Lead Agencies to collect, analyze, and interpret data to improve child care policies and practices.

Sponsored Project Teams will include a state, territory, or tribal CCDF Lead Agency and a research partner from an institution of higher education, within the state agency, a research organization, and/or an organization with demonstrated capacity to conduct rigorous policy research. Partnerships may be formalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), contracts, or sub-award agreements during the course of the project. For state and territory CCDF Lead Agency contact information, please visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/contact-information/state-and-territory-child-care-and-development-fund-administrators>. For Tribal CCDF Lead Agency contact information, please visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/contact-information/tribal-ccdf-contacts-state>.

The research partner and CCDF Lead Agency (or agencies) will actively collaborate with each other through all phases of the project (i.e., selecting questions of interest, developing the logic model, identifying data sources needed to answer questions of interest).

Award recipients will consult with other child care policy collaborators, especially organizations that own relevant data. For example, the following entities may also be included as part of a research partnership project, in addition to the CCDF Lead Agency and research partner:

1. Partnerships across state and/or local agencies;
2. Departments and agencies that administer child care programs for children in families with low incomes, including public or private child care centers, Head Start, or public pre-K;
3. Resource and referral organizations;
4. State agencies or organizations that oversee QIS or licensing initiatives;
5. State agencies designated as Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Lead Agencies;
6. Tribal agencies that administer child care subsidy programs;
7. Tribal agencies participating in the Tribal Early Learning Initiative;
8. County or local agencies that administer child care subsidy programs;
9. State education agencies or organizations that house Pre-Kindergarten to grade 12 data;
10. State education agencies or organizations that house Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C and Part B, Section 619 data;
11. State agencies or organizations that house public health and screening data;
12. State agencies or organizations that house workforce registry or professional development data;
13. Programs and services that provide comprehensive services to young children and their families, including, but not limited to, education and employment services, financial capability services, housing and food assistance, and physical and mental health services;
14. Foundations and charitable organizations;
15. Community-based research agencies and organizations;
16. Head Start/Early Head Start grant recipients;
17. For-profit, center-based providers or networks;
18. Family child care providers or networks;
19. People with lived experience, including, but not limited to, parents; and
20. Providers of technical assistance or consumer education, and other collaborators.

Partnerships between CCDF Lead Agencies and research organizations are expected to increase the long-term capacity of the field to produce, access, and use data to inform child care policies. Specifically, expected partnership outcomes include CCDF Lead Agencies developing greater capacity for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to improve child care policies and practices. Additionally, expected partnership outcomes for research organizations include developing a greater capacity for producing and communicating policy-relevant research.

Past project descriptions can be found at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-state-research-capacity-cooperative-agreements-2001-2011>

Goal 3: To foster active communication and collaboration among award recipients in order to strengthen individual projects and build knowledge about the accessibility and use of data to guide child care policy.

Cross-project collaboration will strengthen individual projects and result in data that informs the field more broadly. Project Teams will be expected to participate in a CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium that will include CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity award recipients and will convene virtually, at least monthly. The CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium will be supported by an OPRE-sponsored federal research center (“Center”). The Center will facilitate collaborative research and dissemination efforts.

Project Teams should reserve sufficient effort to participate in the CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium and participate in Center-sponsored activities, including, but not limited to:

- Attending monthly web meetings;
- Participating in regular discussions with Consortium members;
- Sharing lessons learned;
- Identifying collaboration opportunities, including examining similar research questions and sharing methods for linking data across systems;
- Identifying commonalities and developing collective expertise;
- Participating in the development of cross-project dissemination activities, including publications and presentations to be shared with the field at large; and
- Engaging in collaborative activities or communities of learning with other federally sponsored child care research grants.

To support shared learning and dissemination, award recipients will attend and budget for the following required meetings and conferences:

- **CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium Kick-Off Meeting:** Key project personnel (e.g., Principal Investigator(s) and CCDF Lead Agency partners) will attend the 2-day, in-person, kick-off meeting. This meeting is typically held in Washington, DC (although it could be held virtually), within the first 3 months of the project period. This will be an opportunity to meet other Project Teams in-person, discuss research plans, and identify plans for the monthly web meetings. Upon award, award recipients will be notified of the date of this meeting.
- **Monthly CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium Meeting:** Key project personnel will participate in a monthly virtual convening of the Consortium for the duration of the project period. These meetings will be scheduled after award and are expected to be about 1-hour in length. These meetings will serve as the primary venue for cross-project collaboration and shared learning.
- **Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC) Biennial Meeting:** Key project personnel will attend the CCEEPRC Biennial Meeting, which is typically held biennially in Washington, DC (although it could be held virtually), in the spring for 2 full days. The meeting brings together award recipients; contracted researchers funded by ACF; and federal, state, territory, and tribal CCDF administrators to discuss child care policy research. The next meeting will be held in 2025.

- **CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award Recipient Meeting:** Key project personnel will attend the award recipient meeting to discuss project developments, issues of common interest, and potential collaborative products and resources. This meeting is typically held 1 day prior to or following the CCEEPRC meeting in Washington, DC (although it could be held virtually).

Additionally, Project Teams are encouraged, but not required, to attend:

- **State and Territories CCDF Administrators Meeting (STAM).** STAM is hosted annually in Washington, DC, typically in August, if space is available.
- **National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC).** NRCEC is hosted biennially in Washington, DC, typically in June. The next meeting will be held in summer 2026.

If there are health and safety concerns with in-person convenings, the federal project officer and the CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Consortium will confer regarding acceptable alternatives to these meeting requirements.

Goal 4: Disseminate child care research at the national, state, territory, tribal, and/or local levels.

Results of the research activities funded through this NOFO will be made widely accessible. Project Teams are expected to identify and/or develop opportunities, products, activities, or resources to communicate about the implications and innovations of the research project to both research and policy audiences at the local, state, and national levels. Project Teams will confer with ACF to determine whether specific products are appropriate to be archived with Child Care and Early Education Research Connections (<https://www.researchconnections.org/>).

II. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:

CA (Cooperative Agreement)

Estimated Total Funding:

\$1,500,000

Expected Number of Awards:

10

Award Ceiling:

\$150,000

Per Project Period

Award Floor:

\$75,000

Per Project Period

Average Projected Award Amount:

\$150,000

Per Project Period

Anticipated Project Start Date:

09/30/2024

Length of Project Periods:

18-month project period and budget period

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

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

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

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

Under the cooperative agreements, substantial involvement is anticipated by ACF throughout the duration of the funded projects. ACF will:

- Monitor the project and provide technical assistance and feedback when necessary, including joint decision-making on the research plan and dissemination.
- Provide leadership to maximize cooperation and collaboration among award recipients, including organizing periodic consultations and monthly teleconferences to discuss research activities, share information, and promote coordination among the sponsored projects.
- Schedule and host the award recipient meetings (two in-person meetings and regular teleconferences throughout the project period), set the agenda, and coordinate activities for each meeting.
- Work collaboratively with award recipients to facilitate accomplishment of project goals.
- Facilitate collaboration and coordination with other award recipients, a child care policy research partnerships support center, ACF program offices (e.g., OCC) and their technical assistance providers, and other contractors.

III. Eligibility Information

III.1. Eligible Applicants

The applicant eligibility is unrestricted.

Applicants are required to submit written evidence that research is a primary organizational activity of the research partner as part of the application submission. Research partners are described in *Section I. Program Description, B. Program Goals and Requirements*. The required documentation is described in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*. Lack of the required documentation will disqualify the application from review and from award. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors*.

Applicants are required to provide either:

1. A letter showing approval of the application from, or
2. A letter of proof that the applicant is,

the CCDF Lead Agency that is responsible for setting relevant subsidy policies (i.e., Lead Agency in states, territories, or Tribes). CCDF Lead Agencies are identified by each state and given the authority to administer the CCDF program and may include one agency, or a joint interagency office, at the state, territory, or tribal level. If the policies of interest are determined at the county level or other jurisdiction/area in the state, applications from partnerships between the Lead Agency at that level and research organizations will be eligible.

Applicants that fail to submit either form of the required documentation will be disqualified from review and award. The required documentation is described in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*. See *Section III.3. Other, 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. 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

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

III.3. Other

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.

Evidence of Research as a Primary Organizational Activity

Applications that do not include written evidence that research is a primary organizational activity of the research partner will be disqualified from review and from funding under this NOFO. See *Section III. I. Eligible Applicants*, and *Section IV.2. Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation* for more information. Research partners are described in *Section I. Program Description, B. Program Goals and Requirements*.

Letter of Approval from, or Proof of, CCDF Lead Agency

Applications that do not include either:

1. A letter showing approval of the application from, or
2. A letter of proof that the applicant is,

the CCDF Lead Agency that is responsible for setting relevant subsidy policies (i.e., Lead Agency in states, territories, Tribes, or local subsidy administering agencies), will be disqualified from review and from funding under this NOFO.

See *Section III.1. Eligible Applicants*, and *Section IV.2. Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*.

CCDF Lead Agencies can partner on multiple applications for funding under this awards program; however, it is unlikely that a Lead Agency would receive more than one award as the award recipient or as the partner. This also applies to research partner organizations, such that organizations may submit multiple applications as the research partner, but an organization is unlikely to receive more than one award as the award recipient or as the partner.

Notification of Application Disqualification

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

OPRE Review Team
CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award
c/o ICF
1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston
VA
20190
(877) 350-5913 (phone)
(703) 934-3740 (fax)
CCDFresearch@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:

Page Limits. Applicants must limit the entire application to **100 pages**. This page limit applies to the length of the Project Description File and the Appendices File, combined.

The required SFs, assurances, and certifications are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices files. Therefore, they are not included in the 100-page limit.

Organization of Application. Applicants are strongly advised to use heading and subheadings that correspond to the required application sections. Sections must be carefully labeled to ease reviewer's identification of information relevant to the application review criteria. Additional headers and sub-headers may also be used to organize the content of each section.

The **Project Description File** includes the following sections. Applicants must number the pages of the file, beginning with the Table of Contents. ACF suggests organizing the file according to the sections and in the order presented below. See additional instructions later in this section (under "*The Project Description*") for details on preparing the full project description.

1. Table of Contents
2. Project Summary/Abstract (single-spaced, one page maximum)
3. Approach
 - Objectives and Significance
 - Research Approach
 - Description of Research Partnership
 - Management Plan

- Dissemination Plan
- Staff Roles and Qualifications
- Organizational Capacity
- References
- Project Timeline and Milestones
- Subawards (optional)

4. Budget and Budget Justification

The **Appendices** file includes the following sections. ACF suggests organizing the file according to the sections and in the order presented below:

1. Additional Eligibility Documentation: Letter of Approval from, or Proof of CCDF Lead Agency and Evidence of Research as a Primary Organizational Activity
2. Supporting Documentation of Organizational Capacity
3. Supporting Documentation of Staff Qualifications
 - Resumes/Curriculum Vitae
4. Letters of Support, Third-Party Agreements and/or MOU
5. Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
6. Plan for Oversight of Federal Awards Funds
7. Proof of Legal Status of Applicant Entity (if applicable)
8. Other Materials in Support of the Proposal

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/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters>.

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.

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 http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html . General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/ . Applicants may also contact OHRP by email (OHRP@HHS.gov) or by phone (240-453-6900).
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Required of all applicants. Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and project award period.	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
	Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: http://www.sam.gov .	
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 award.	Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non- Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs	Submission is required for all applicants when applying for a non-construction project. SFs must be used. Forms must be submitted by the application due date. By signing and submitting the SF-424B, applicants are making the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination.	Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project.
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Submission is required for all	Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	applicants by the application due date.	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 award.	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, 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

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.

Letters of intent should be submitted via email to CCDFresearch@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).

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.

Evidence of Research as a Primary Organizational Activity.

Written evidence that research is a primary organizational activity of the research partner is

required. Research partners are described in *Section I. Program Description, B. Program Goals and Requirements*. This evidence must include a history of the completion of high-quality research and/or evaluation work within the past 2 years. Also, submission of resumes that reflect staff that are experienced, skilled, and knowledgeable in advanced research and evaluation methods is required.

Letter of Approval from, or Proof of CCDF Lead Agency.

Applicants must submit either:

1. A letter showing approval of the application from, or
2. A letter of proof that the applicant is,

from the CCDF Lead Agency that is part of the collaborative partnership. CCDF Lead Agencies are identified by each state and given the authority to administer the CCDF program and may include one agency, or a joint interagency office, at the state, territory, or tribal level. The documentation must show that the CCDF Lead Agency is responsible for setting relevant subsidy policies (i.e., Lead Agency in states, territories, or Tribes). If the policies of interest are determined at the county level or other jurisdiction/area in the state, applications from partnerships between the Lead Agency at that level and research organizations will be eligible. One of the two letters described are required documentation and must be included in the application. Lack of required documentation will disqualify the applicant from review and from award. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors*.

Approach

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

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

Applicants are to submit an application for the activities to be performed in the planning grant (Phase I). The strongest applications for the planning grants will be those that:

- demonstrate an understanding of the two-phase process;
- present information on the activities to be completed during the planning grant (Phase I); and
- describe how the planning process will lead to the data and information needed to submit a competitive application for implementation funding (Phase II).

Applicants must address all of the core activities to be completed during Phase I (e.g., working with research partners, developing a rigorous research plan); and explain how findings/results of those activities will lead to the implementation of a strong research plan for Phase II. Applicants must describe how the activities of the planning phase can be utilized to create the best possible set of circumstances to implement a rigorous, policy-relevant research plan.

Objectives and Significance

Applicants must describe:

- The current state of knowledge relevant to the policy issues being studied and link the identified issues to the goals and questions of interest.
- The key questions of interest and initial hypotheses that demonstrate understanding of the critical policy issues and research needs of the partnering CCDF Lead Agency. The hypotheses must be justified given current theory and the extant empirical evidence, citing relevant literature.
- The objectives of the proposed research project, along with justification, and summarize how the expected outcomes will inform specific programmatic and/or policy decisions of the CCDF Lead Agency and may be applied to the policymaking in other states, territories, Tribes, and/or localities.
- How the proposed research project will build the data and research capacity of partnering CCDF Lead Agencies to collect, analyze, and interpret data to guide child care policy decisions and program improvement.
- How the proposed research project will identify and address barriers to CCDF Lead Agencies collecting, analyzing, and using data for evidence-informed child care policymaking.
- The contribution the proposed work will make on improving state, territory, and tribal data systems in other states, territories, Tribes, and/or localities.

Research Approach

Applicants must describe in detail:

- Current methods and data systems, including linked data, used by the CCDF Lead Agency, and the strengths and weaknesses of these data systems.
- A feasible approach for identifying and refining questions of interest to the CCDF Lead Agency.
- How proposed project activities will lead to the development of a rigorous research plan that addresses the specific key questions of this award program (described in *Section I. Program Description, B. Program Goals and Requirements*).
- How proposed project activities will support identifying, linking, and using data to develop and improve proposed state, territory, and tribal data systems.
- How proposed project activities will lead to the development of a logic model that details:
 - the questions of interest,
 - necessary data elements, and
 - the expected outcomes.
- A feasible approach to engaging key collaborators in the planned research activities that are meant to inform CCDF Lead Agency research priorities, particularly with collaborators from which data will be collected (e.g., families eligible for the CCDF program, programs/providers that participate in the child care subsidy system, the CCEE workforce, and organizations providing comprehensive services to children and families).
- A plan for flexibility in the research approach for making improvements over the course of the planning period.

- An understanding of the two-phase process, present information on the activities to be completed during the planning grant (Phase I), and how the planning process will lead to the data and information needed to submit a competitive application for implementation funding (Phase II).
- A willingness to collaborate with the Consortium of award recipients to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for collaboration, including examining similar research questions, sharing methods for linking data across systems, and developing resources to be shared with the field. Project proposals **must** reserve effort to participate in these collaborative activities throughout the project period.
- Expected preliminary results within the project period of the planning grant. For example, this may include:
 - Assessing existing data sources and systems;
 - Analyzing existing data;
 - Identifying relevant data sources for linking;
 - Finalizing data agreements or data management systems; and
 - Consulting with key collaborators.

Descriptions of results should align with the proposed activities described in the research approach.

- Whether and how the proposed project will address or consider equity and inclusion. For example, applicants should discuss (as applicable):
 - How consideration of equity and inclusion informed the proposed research approach.
 - How individuals from populations of interest and/or with lived experiences will be engaged in the research process to inform the research questions, measures, or design.

If the proposed project is not expected to address equity and inclusion, 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 inclusion lens.

Description of Research Partnership

Applicants must discuss the composition, stage, and goals of their research partnership.

Specifically, applicants must describe:

- All organizations that will form the Project Team (i.e., at a minimum, representatives of a state, territory, or tribal CCDF Lead Agency and an entity with demonstrated research capacity), and provide evidence that each partner is committed to the partnership (e.g., formal letters of specific commitment or support from each partner). If the policies of interest are determined at the county level or other jurisdiction/area in the state, applications from partnerships between the Lead Agency at that level and research organizations will be entertained. Partnerships may involve multiple Lead Agencies or sites to support comparison. In fact, collaborative projects that would explore common questions and data sources across states are encouraged.
- Any (existing or planned) partnerships, subawards, or data agreements.

- The stage of the partnership (i.e., a new partnership or a mature one), and explain how the partnership's maturity will affect the proposed work, roles, and the expectations for the results of the project including both the research produced and the future of the partnership. Partnerships at any stage are acceptable, but it is important to show that the partnership is prepared to complete the work under Phase I.
- How the partnering organizations decided to propose a project and how they collaboratively identified the questions of interest and designed the activities to be conducted under the planning project.
- How all partners will be involved in all phases of the project (e.g., consulting in targeted goals, design of project).
- How the Project Team will effectively collaborate and communicate with each other, and with project collaborators and target audiences, at key points throughout the project.
- The partnership's review and decision-making process (e.g., how it will determine research directions and plans and will review and approve publications/presentations of project developments).
- Past or current partnerships among Project Team members, if applicable, that demonstrate the ability to carry out collaborative research.

Management Plan

Applicants must provide a sound and feasible management plan. This section must:

- Describe, in detail, how:
 - the project will be structured and managed (including coordination and/or integration between partnering institutions);
 - the timeliness of activities will be ensured;
 - quality control will be maintained; and
 - costs will be controlled.
- Describe how the project will be managed by the award recipient to ensure that partners operate as a cohesive team and that project goals are carried out efficiently and cost-effectively. This should include discussion of the roles, responsibilities, and expected contributions of each partner organization, reporting relationships, and lines of authority. Applicants should include an organizational chart portraying the management, supervision, and administration of the project across all subcontracts, subawards, and other formal relationships within the partnership.
- Include a timeline with target start and end dates for major project milestones/activities and products demonstrating how the proposed project objectives will be completed within the project period.
- Discuss the partnership's agreement and strategy for sharing and storing both existing data and data to be gathered as part of the research activities. This should include the data sources that will be shared, data storage and management, who will develop the documentation necessary for their use, and data availability to partners and other interested parties.
- Discuss potential problems or challenges to accomplishing project objectives, including factors that may affect the quality of the research or its outcomes, that may undermine the ability of partners to collaborate effectively, or may hinder the sharing, review, and

dissemination of information. This should include a description of how problems and challenges will be discussed and handled by participating partnership organizations.

- Describe all subcontracts, subawards, and other formal relationships within the partnership. Partners that will provide access to data or records must provide a letter stipulating the terms of their agreement with the Project Team.

Dissemination Plan

Applicants must provide a comprehensive communication or dissemination plan that outlines how the Project Team will communicate about the project with researchers, policymakers, CCDF Lead Agencies, and other interested parties. The dissemination plan must identify target audiences and appropriate products and/or activities for each. In developing a dissemination plan, applicants are encouraged to consult OPRE resources addressing dissemination of human services research, and particularly the report titled The Value-Added Research Dissemination Framework. The Framework is available on ACF's website at:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/opre-research-dissemination-project-2010-2012>.

The proposed dissemination plan must discuss:

- Plans to consult and/or collaborate with partner agencies to develop dissemination products. Plans should describe potential contributions from partner agencies and other relevant interested parties in developing products and/or disseminating findings.
- Specific products and/or activities that are intended for specific, key target audiences. Applicants must identify both research- and policy-oriented products to communicate project developments and findings. In addition to traditional written research products and dissemination channels (e.g., conference presentations, technical papers or reports, peer-reviewed scholarly publications), plans should identify activities to communicate and/or facilitate use of the sponsored research by policymakers, CCDF administrators and agencies, and/or other interested parties. As examples, products may include presentations or research briefs tailored for state policymakers, software, or web-based tools, if applicable. Dissemination plans and products may differ substantially depending on the target audiences.
- Plans for making products developed under this award publicly available.

Staff Roles and Qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate that the Project Team has the experience to manage a research project of comparable size, scope, and complexity, as well as the expertise to carry out the proposed project on time, within budget, and with a high degree of quality.

Specifically, applicants must:

- Describe experience of the project leadership, including the Principal Investigator, in managing research projects of comparable size, scope, and complexity as the proposed project.
- Provide evidence that the Principal Investigator and key personnel (i.e., collaborators, consultants, advisors) have knowledge and expertise in CCDF, subsidy policy, public assistance programs, data systems, and other areas addressed by the proposed research.

- Describe the expertise of the project leadership in conducting research with low-income families and agencies administering subsidy or other public assistance programs.
- Identify all proposed consultants or advisors, document their expertise, and describe their roles and responsibilities or how their services will be utilized. Include letters of commitment or intent, if possible.
- Identify staff responsible for project management, including budget management, and describe roles and responsibilities; professional and/or technical qualifications; time commitment in relation to their other duties; the period of time they will be employed; and whether their continued employment will be dependent solely on the funds to be awarded under this announcement. This includes describing personnel responsible for managing the budget and federal funds.
- Provide evidence that the proposed project leadership has experience building and sustaining research partnerships and collaborating in research development, implementation, and dissemination.
- Demonstrate that proposed staffing levels are adequate to carry out all project activities on time, within budget, and with a high level of quality and attention over the course of the research project.

Subawards (optional)

Project Teams may opt to transfer a portion of substantive programmatic work to other organizations through subaward(s). If applicable, applicants must state their intention to subaward.

Consistent with the eligibility criteria, any eligible entity may serve as a subrecipient (i.e., a recipient of the subaward). If partnerships will be structured with a subaward, applicants must include a subaward selection process that includes a risk assessment of potential subrecipients. Consistent with the expectations for Project Teams discussed throughout this funding opportunity, the applicant must clearly identify and justify the roles, responsibilities, and management plan for all subrecipients.

The prime recipient must maintain a substantive role in the project. ACF defines a substantive role as conducting activities and/or providing services funded under the award that are necessary and integral to the completion of the project. Applicants must describe their plan to monitor all subrecipients in accordance with 45 CFR §75.352. Subrecipient monitoring activities alone do not constitute a substantive role. Furthermore, ACF does not fund awards where the role of the applicant is primarily to serve as a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute.

Subrecipient(s) must meet the eligibility requirements identified in the NOFO, *Section III.1. Eligible Applicants*. Additionally, all subrecipient(s) must obtain a Data Universal Numbering System number, or after government-wide implementation, a UEI assigned by SAM, if they do not already have one. Prime recipients are required to check SAM to verify that the subrecipient(s) is/are not debarred, suspended, or ineligible.

Please reference "Award Term and Condition on Subawards" on the [ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#) website for further requirements involving subawards.

Project Timeline and Milestones

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

Organizational Capacity

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

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

Applicants must:

- Demonstrate that each partner has the organizational capacity and resources to:
 - successfully carry out the project on time, within budget, and to a high standard of quality, including the capacity to resolve a wide variety of technical and management problems that may occur; and
 - efficiently carry out its assigned roles and functions for a project with the proposed project's size, complexity, and scope, including evidence of successful management of federal funds.
- Describe how the proposed partners are appropriately and significantly committed to the project's research goals. This includes demonstrating that all partners have sufficient fiscal commitment and organizational support.
- If known at the time of application submission, the applicant must disclose their intent to enter into subaward arrangements in their application. For each proposed subaward, the applicant must describe the work to be performed by the subrecipient(s) and explain why the participation of the subrecipient is necessary, why the applicant cannot achieve the objectives without the subrecipient(s)' participation, and explain how the prime recipient plans to maintain a substantive role in the project.

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.

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

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 the SF-424C, as applicable, for the entire project period that is being fully funded (the budget period and the project period are the same).

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

- The budget must include itemized expenses for the project according to the cost categories in the SF-424A and a detailed narrative budget justification that explains the calculations.
- The budget must reflect the entire 18-month project period; there is only one budget period for the length of the project.
- The budget must include funds to collaborate with the Consortium of award recipients to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- The budget and budget justification must include support for key project personnel to participate in the monthly virtual Consortium meeting, the CCEEPRC meeting, the Consortium kick-off meeting, and the award recipient meeting.

- For applicants proposing to use subaward(s), if the total amount budgeted for subawards exceeds 50 percent of total direct costs for the budget period, the applicant must provide a justification for subawarding the portion of the project and must explain how the prime recipient plans to maintain a substantive role in the project.

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; project 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://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

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://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

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://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

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://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

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

For questions related to 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

Number of Days from Publication 30

06/08/2024

Number of Days from Publication 60

Due Date for Applications

07/08/2024

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

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

OPRE Review Team

CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award Program

c/o ICF

1902 Reston Metro Plaza

Reston

VA

20190

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.

Objectives and Significance

Maximum Points: 15

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. The current state of knowledge relevant to the policy issues being studied and clearly links the identified issues to the goals and questions of interest of the proposed project.
2. Key questions and hypotheses that demonstrate a solid understanding of the critical policy issues and research needs of the partnering CCDF Lead Agency.
3. The objectives of the proposed research project, along with justification, and summarizes how the expected outcomes will inform specific programmatic and/or policy decisions of the CCDF Lead Agency.
4. How the proposed research project will build the data and research capacity of partnering CCDF Lead Agencies to collect, analyze, and interpret data to guide child care policy decisions and program improvement.
5. How the proposed research project will identify and address barriers to CCDF Lead Agencies collecting, analyzing, and using data for evidence-informed child care policymaking.
6. How the proposed work would contribute to improving state, territory, and tribal data systems in other states, territories, Tribes, and/or localities.

Research Approach

Maximum Points: 25

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. Current methods and data systems, including linked data if applicable, used by the CCDF Lead Agency and the strengths and weaknesses of these data systems.
2. A feasible approach for identifying and refining questions of interest to the CCDF Lead Agency.
3. How proposed activities to be performed during the project period will lead to the development of a rigorous research plan that addresses the specific key questions of this award program (see *Section I. Program Description, B. Program Goals and Requirements*).

4. How proposed project activities will support identifying, linking, and using data to develop and improve proposed state, territory, and tribal data systems.
5. How proposed project activities will lead to the development of a logic model that details: (1) the questions of interest; (2) necessary data elements; and (3) the expected outcomes.
6. A feasible approach to engaging key collaborators in the planned research activities that are meant to inform CCDF Lead Agency research priorities, particularly with collaborators from which data will be collected.
7. A sufficient plan for flexibility in the research approach for making improvements over the course of the planning period.
8. An understanding of the two-phase process, presents information on the activities to be completed during the planning grant (Phase I), and describes how the planning process will lead to the data and information needed to submit a competitive application for implementation funding (Phase II).
9. A willingness to collaborate with the Consortium of award recipients to share lessons learned and identify collaboration opportunities and reserves effort to participate in these collaborative activities throughout the project period.
10. Expected preliminary results within the project period of the planning grant.
11. How the proposed project has or will incorporate an equity and inclusion lens, or why this is not appropriate for the proposed research questions, data sources, or methods.

Description of Research Partnership

Maximum Points: 15

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. An appropriate Project Team to guide the proposed work. The Project Team includes, at a minimum, a CCDF Lead Agency and an organization with demonstrated research capacity. There is evidence that all proposed partners, including any consultants, are willing to participate.
2. How all partners:
 - a. Are prepared to collaborate effectively to complete the proposed activities;
 - b. Were involved in the project development of the proposed research project; and
 - c. Will continue to be involved in meaningful and appropriate ways throughout all phases of the work.
3. How the planned activities, roles of the partners, and expectations for the results are appropriate for the maturity of the research partnership.
4. How the Project Team will effectively collaborate and communicate at key points throughout the project with research partners, CCDF Lead Agencies, and project collaborators, and clearly describes processes for review and decision-making about research plans and communicating project developments.

Management Plan

Maximum Points: 10

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. The management structure and procedures that will be used to keep the project on track, ensure a high quality of work, and manage costs.

2. A comprehensive and sound management plan that will ensure coordination of activities among all members of the partnership to efficiently accomplish the goals of the proposed project. This includes clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and functional relationships among the different partners, and, if applicable, the subawardees expected to contribute (e.g., consultants, advisors, steering or management committees, technical workgroups, and/or coordinating bodies).
3. A detailed and reasonable project timeline with feasible target completion dates for major project milestones and products. The timeline demonstrates that the proposed project objectives will be completed within the project period.
4. The partnership's agreement and strategy for sharing and storage of both existing data and data to be gathered as part of the research activities. This includes discussing data storage, management, and availability to partners or other parties.
5. Potential problems or challenges to accomplishing project objectives, including factors that may affect the quality of the research or its outcomes, undermine the ability of partners to collaborate effectively, or hinder the sharing, review, and dissemination of information. The applicant describes a reasonable plan for how partners will make decisions and address problems and challenges.

Dissemination Plan

Maximum Points: 5

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. A specific and comprehensive dissemination plan that will maximize the relevance and utilization of the sponsored research and meets the dissemination goals outlined in *Section I. Program Description* and *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.
2. A sufficient dissemination plan that will target relevant policy, practice, and research audiences and proposes specific dissemination products, activities, and distribution channels that are appropriate for each audience.
3. An appropriate plan for making products and/or resources developed under this award publicly available.
4. A reasonable, appropriate, and specific plan for working with partners, other award recipients, and other interested parties to develop products and/or disseminate findings.

Staff Roles and Qualifications

Maximum Points: 15

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant:

1. Demonstrates that the project leadership, including the Principal Investigator, has sufficient experience managing research projects of comparable size, scope, and complexity as the proposed project.
2. Demonstrates how the Principal Investigator and key personnel have knowledge and expertise in CCDF, subsidy policy, public assistance programs, data systems, and other areas addressed by the proposed research.
3. Demonstrates that the Principal Investigator and key personnel have sufficient experience conducting research with low-income families and agencies administering subsidy or other public assistance programs.
4. Identifies and describes all proposed consultants or advisors and their qualifications for assigned roles and responsibilities.

5. Identifies staff responsible for project management, including budget management, and describes roles and responsibilities; professional and/or technical qualifications; time commitment in relation to their other duties; the period of time they will be employed; and whether their continued employment will be dependent solely on the funds to be awarded under this announcement. This includes describing personnel responsible for managing the budget and federal funds.
6. Communicates how the project leadership has experience building and sustaining research partnerships and collaborating in research development, implementation, and dissemination.
7. Demonstrates that proposed staffing levels are adequate to carry out all project activities on time, within budget, and with a high level of quality and attention over the course of the research project.

Organizational Capacity

Maximum Points: 5

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant describes:

1. That each partner has the organizational capacity and resources to:
 - a. Successfully carry out the project on time, within budget, and to a high standard of quality, including the capacity to resolve a wide variety of technical and management problems that may occur; and
 - b. Effectively and efficiently complete a project with the proposed project's size, complexity, and scope. This includes evidence of successful management of federal funds.
2. How the proposed partners are appropriately and significantly committed to the project's research goals. This includes demonstrating that all partners have sufficient fiscal commitment and organizational support.
3. Whether the applicant proposes to use subaward(s), and if so, describes the work to be performed by the subrecipient(s), explains why the participation of the subrecipient is necessary, why the applicant cannot achieve the objectives without the subrecipient(s)' participation, and explains how the prime recipient plans to maintain a substantive role in the project.

The Project Budget and Budget Justification

Maximum Points: 10

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The applicant includes a detailed budget with the itemized expenses according to the cost categories in the SF-424A and a detailed narrative budget justification that explains the calculations comprising the amount requested.
2. The budget clearly supports the entire 18-month project period. Proposed costs are fully justified and reasonable to complete the proposed research objectives within the project period, including, but not limited to, research activities, management, and dissemination/communication activities.
3. The applicant has budgeted funds to collaborate with the Consortium of award recipients to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for collaboration.
4. The budget and budget justification includes sufficient support for key project personnel (e.g., Principal Investigator(s), Project Directors, Lead Agency representatives) to

participate in the monthly virtual Consortium meeting, the CCEEPRC meeting, the Consortium kick-off meeting, and the award recipient meeting.

5. If the applicant proposes to use subaward(s) and the total amount budgeted for subrecipients exceeds 50 percent of total direct costs for the project, the applicant provides a clear justification for allocating that portion of the project to those organizations.

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.

OPRE will conduct an administrative review of the applications and results of the competitive review panels and will make recommendations for funding to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation, considering the goals of the CCDF Lead Agency Data and Research Capacity Award Program as listed in *Section I. Program Description*. Applications may be funded in whole or in part depending on the combination of projects that best meet the needs of ACF and the CCDF program, such as prioritizing applications that complement or fill gaps in ACF's current research portfolio and the number of applications received from a single state or organization.

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

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

Human Subjects

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

VI.3. Reporting

Performance Progress Reports:

Semi-Annually

Reporting Requirements

Recipients 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

Krystal

Bichay-Awadalla

Administration for Children and Families

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Division of Child and Family Development

330 C Street SW

Washington

DC

20201

(877) 350-5913 (phone)

(202) 401-5540 (phone)

(703) 934-3740 (fax)

CCDFresearch@icf.com

Office of Grants Management Contact

Bridget

Shea Westfall

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/.

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

ACF Funding Opportunities Forecasts and NOFOs 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 <https://www.grants.gov/accessibility-compliance>

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

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

The Office of Child Care www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/

Application Checklist

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

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> . See http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html for additional information. This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov	Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the <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> . This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award	Referenced in <i>Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and</i>	A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Management (SAM) registration.	<p><i>System for Award Management (SAM)</i> in the funding opportunity.</p> <p>To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to http://www.sam.gov.</p>	Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i>.</p> <p>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.</p>	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> .
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i>.</p> <p>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.</p>	Submission is due with the application package or prior to award.
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i>.</p> <p>These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section. They are required for applications that include only non-construction activities.</p>	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)	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i>.</p> <p>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.</p>	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> .

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	<p>"Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i></p> <p>This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.</p>	<p>If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application.</p> <p>If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to award.</p>
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 <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>
Project Summary	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description.</i></p> <p>The Project Summary is limited to one single-spaced page.</p>	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>
Proof of Non-Profit Status	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity.</i>	<p>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.</p> <p>If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to award.</p>
Mandatory Grant Disclosure	Requirement, submission instructions, and mailing addresses are found in the "Mandatory Grant Disclosure" in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications.</i>	If applicable, concurrent submission to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Office of the Inspector General is required.
The Project Budget and Budget Justification	Referenced in <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.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
		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)	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification</i>.</p> <p>The IDR must be submitted with the application package.</p>	<p>If the IDR is available by the application due date, it must be submitted with the application package.</p> <p>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 award.</p>
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> .

