Administration for Children and Families

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

Quality Improvement Center: Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency
HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911
Application Due Date: 07/06/2021
Quality Improvement Center: Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency  
HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911  
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Funding Opportunity Title: Quality Improvement Center: Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency
Announcement Type: Initial
Funding Opportunity Number: HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911
Primary CFDA Number: 93.652
Due Date for Letter of Intent: 06/06/2021
Due Date for Applications: 07/06/2021

Executive Summary

Notice:

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

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to establish, by awarding a cooperative agreement, one national Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth (QIC/EY) that will conduct six to eight projects in partnership with public child welfare systems of the states, tribes, counties, or territories to produce a multi-faceted system of successful models of youth engagement. The youth engagement models will include engaging youth in finding their own permanency as well as engaging them in identifying the barriers and building strategies to successful engagement of youth throughout the system of care. The QIC/EY will also develop capacity building training, tools, and strategies that will serve as a change agent for the child welfare workforce and system to embrace the voice of youth in all aspects of the system of care. It is expected that this systemic change will be reflected through intentional policy, practice, and culture shifts within the selected pilot sites.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority
Title II, section 203(b)(4) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978 (42 U.S.C. 5113(b)(4))

Description
BACKGROUND
Engaging children/youth in successfully achieving permanency after they have experienced an entry into the child welfare system is a critical need as highlighted through the highly successful Adoption Call To Action efforts of the Children’s Bureau (CB) in 2019-20. Assuring no child or youth leaves care without a safe and stable permanency is essential and at the heart of all work within the child welfare system.

The child welfare workforce is frequently compromised by lack of proper knowledge, support, and workload to authentically engage the children/youth on their caseload. Equipping them with the proper knowledge, tools, and supports will build the capacity of the workforce and serve as a support to them and thus prevent burnout. This, in turn, will serve to stabilize a workforce often disrupted by constant employee turnover.

It is critical to engage children/youth in the child welfare system as this work is about their story and their life. Authentically engaging youth provides them with some sense of control and builds their self-advocacy skills. Successful relational casework in which the worker is a trusted partner with the youth supports and empowers the youth. Authentic relationships between caseworker and youth enables them to be co-creators of the youth’s permanency plan. Understanding and helping a youth tell their story benefits all because it provides a more effective means to gathering information about the youth’s relationships, many of whom may be potential permanent families for the youth.

Research has shown that children/youth fare best in stable, loving families that have the capacity to provide permanency for them throughout their lifetime. The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data indicates that annually, approximately 20,000 youth age out of the child welfare system without the benefit of a family to support and care for them. Without a secure and stable family on which they can rely, these older teens are at a far greater risk in making a successful transition to adulthood. There is evidence that 40 percent of these youth that age out without a family experience homelessness and by the age of 24, only half have found employment. One quarter of these youth experience incarceration, 42 percent drop out of high school, and only 4 percent earn a college degree. In addition, 1 in 4 of these youth experience post-traumatic stress disorder, and 71 percent of the women are pregnant by the age of 21.

Older teens in foster care (15-17 years of age) have the lowest permanency rates and, annually, average only five percent of all children adopted, although they represent 11 percent of children/youth waiting for adoption. After the termination of parental rights, the youth in this age range wait twice as long to achieve permanency as children/youth 14 years of age and younger. These dire statistics are too frequently the result of the failure to fully, authentically, and consistently engage youth in achieving their own permanency. Youth adopted as older teens or those that have left care without permanency have consistently cited incidents of their workers giving up on their chances of achieving permanency and/or workers changing frequently and not bothering to research their file or engage to understand their desires and wishes. The child welfare workforce may be resistant to seeking permanent families for older youth as they may believe the youth do not need a family as they near adulthood, or they may believe it will take away their focus on achieving permanency for younger children.

**PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to establish one QIC/EY that will be responsible
for assuring the development of the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced, evidence-based models of youth engagement that can be replicated in other states, counties, tribes, and territories and promote the assurance that every youth leaves the care of the child welfare system to a safe and stable permanency, whether through reunification, guardianship, or adoption. These models of youth engagement will also incorporate the principles of relational permanency assuring that youth are able to maintain the critical relationships with siblings and kin that may, or may not, be part of the youth’s legal permanency;
- A model training/coaching and capacity building instrument with proven success in the pilot sites of transforming the culture of the child welfare system and workforce in the authentic engagement of children/youth that can be replicated in other states, counties, tribes, and territories; and
- Systemic change through intentional policy, practice, and culture shifts within the selected pilot site child welfare systems, related service providers, and the courts that promote the authentic engagement of youth throughout the continuation of care of the child welfare system.

**QIC Responsibilities**

The funded QIC/EY will be responsible for developing and/or furthering the evidence-base of existing models of engaging youth in achieving their own permanency that can be replicated in other child welfare systems to achieve long-term, stable permanency. The QIC/EY will also produce one overall training for the workforce that will be utilized consistently across pilot sites so as to alter the mindset, practice, and overall culture of the child welfare workforce to assure effective and authentic youth engagement throughout the child welfare system. The training/coaching model will provide for key concepts of youth engagement to be incorporated into the overall pre-service training for the workforce and also provide for a stand-alone training for casework staff. The QIC/EY will support innovative, collaborative, and effective practices in the development of these elements and the strategies for each of the pilot sites. This training model will be refined through the course of the funding period with the goal of being a replicable tool for other jurisdictions. The QIC/EY approach will be to generate and disseminate knowledge on effective practice models of youth engagement and on the effective elements required to impact the workforce on embracing the engagement principles. The QIC/EY will be responsible for ensuring that each pilot site has the capacity to commit to and implement the requirements of this grant and will also provide an intensive level of technical assistance to each site and assure cross-site learning occurs.

In order to accomplish this goal, the QIC will be responsible for the following:

- Selecting and developing six to eight pilot projects representing different jurisdictions and led by the child welfare system of a state, county, tribe, or territory;
- Creating and implementing a capacity building training tool for the child welfare workforce regarding authentic engagement of children/youth throughout the system of care. This training and coaching tool will be implemented consistently throughout each site;
- Supporting systemic change in each pilot site that embraces and integrates the youth
voice in addressing barriers and building strategies to ensure safe and stable permanency for all children and youth, and ensure the continuity of kin and other key relationships in their lives; and

• Involving youth who are currently in the care of the child welfare system and/or recently egressed from care (either to reunification, adoption, guardianship, or independence) throughout the project for both the operation of the QIC/EY and in each of the pilot sites. Modeling authentic youth engagement and integrating the youth voice into all aspects of the work of this project is paramount and considered to be the key to its success.

The development and enrichment of relationships is a core concept of this QIC/EY, and children and youth will be considered the primary resource for workers. Children and youth voice is the most critical and effective means by which workers will be able to understand their perspective about their own permanency and also serve as a guide to potential placements and permanency. Beyond their potential as a legal permanency relationship, siblings and other kin relationships must be considered for the important relational permanency they represent for the children/youth.

Pilot Sites

The QIC must partner with the state, tribal, or territory public child welfare system in their selection of pilot sites. Selected pilot sites must represent different jurisdictions at the state, county, tribal, or territory level. They must represent varying size child welfare systems and reflect a mix of urban and rural settings. At least one site will serve more than 20,000 children/youth each year, and at least one must serve less than 5,000 children/youth each year. The remaining sites must serve between 5,000-20,000 children/youth each year.

Each pilot site may have a mix of unique and/or shared components; however, it is expected that each will be tailored to meet the unique needs of that state, county, tribe, or territory.

In the review and consideration of the strategy for each pilot site, the common and variable aspects noted below will be considered.

Common aspects of the pilot sites will include the following:

• Training/coaching and capacity building of the workforce to equip them with an understanding and ability to engage in effective and authentic relationships with the youth they serve;
• Method and process for identifying the children/youth targeted for each pilot site;
• Development of youth engagement models tailored to meet the needs of the targeted youth; and
• Strategies for the integration of the youth voice in identifying and addressing systemic barriers to attaining successful permanency for all youth.

Variable aspects of the pilot sites will include the following:

• The type of effective youth engagement models utilized in each site and the point of the continuum of the system in which the model will be implemented;
• The geographic settings for service models (urban and rural);
• The structures of the state, county, or tribal child welfare systems chosen as pilot sites; and
• The administrative organization and staffing structure of each of the pilot sites.

In all sites, the QIC/EY will work intensively with each pilot site to identify barriers and make recommendations for needed changes in the state, county, tribal, or territory child welfare system’s laws, policies, procedures, and practices to assure that the identified evidence-based youth engagement strategies will work most effectively.

All selected pilot sites will be engaged in training/coaching designed by the QIC/EY to build the overall capacity of the workforce, which will provide, at a minimum, the following basic elements of youth engagement:

• Understanding that success for children/youth in care is derived only through recognizing the dignity and respect that they deserve;
• Understanding that strengthening and dignifying the youth voice requires transformation in the structure of the system and in the practice of the workforce;
• Elements of authentic engagement and relationship building between the workforce and children/youth with the understanding that relationship building is a continual and healing process to promote the healing of trauma;
• Coaching and practice for the workforce to assure that this approach to engagement is integrated into all aspects of their work throughout the entire continuum of the child welfare system; and
• Examination of how to implement effective youth engagement on both an individual basis as well as within the system as a whole to examine barriers to successful permanency for every child/youth and develop strategies for successful change.

In determining youth engagement models for each pilot site, the following project components will be considered as examples for inclusion in each model:

• Early engagement efforts with children/youth at point of entry into the system that continue through the point of their achieving permanency (through reunification, adoption, or guardianship);
• Incorporation of tools that aid the development of relationship building and understanding the history, interests, and perspective of the child/youth (i.e., life books);
• Limiting change of worker assignment for children/youth to assure continuity of worker/youth relationship;
• Assurance that all needs of children/youth have been assessed and are being met;
• Intensive efforts to support finding permanency for children/youth;
• Mining of the child/youth’s case file and other means of determining that all important connections for and to the youth are examined and utilized in engaging youth;
• Workforce training regarding authentic engagement of youth that makes the relationship with children/youth tantamount to achieving permanency and becomes a “way of life” and ingrained in the system of care;
• Provision of regular means of determining a youth’s thoughts, concerns, and wishes and giving this a leading, respected, and successful means of prioritizing a worker’s interaction and expected responsibility;
• Recognizing that youth voice is paramount to success;
• Provision of advocacy and support services for the youth in all aspects of care, i.e.,
educationally, socially, medically, etc.; and
• Targeted recruitment strategies that incorporate the voice of youth.

Project Phases
The project will be completed in the following two phases: Phase I, Planning and Site selection;
and Phase II, Implementation and Evaluation.

Phase I: Planning and Site Selection (Year 1)
During an initial 12-month planning process, the QIC/EY will perform the following functions:

• Research and develop basic competencies and a training/coaching/capacity building tool
  that will be utilized consistently in all pilot sites and will be integrated into pre-service
  training as well as applied throughout the system for casework staff.
• Select six to eight pilot sites representing different jurisdictions and led by a public child
  welfare system at the state, county, tribal, or territory level.
• Research, develop, and select state-of-the-art youth engagement models that provide
  authentic means of engaging youth in determining their own permanency and in assuring
  the maintenance of kin and other key relationships in their lives.
• Determine with each pilot site the youth engagement model that will be utilized within
  their given system.
• Determine with each pilot site a plan for the infusion of the training/coaching/capacity
  building work to inculcate the child welfare system and produce transformation in the
  workforce.
• Determine with each pilot site the plans for systemic change to assure the youth voice is
  embraced to identify barriers and build strategies for improved permanency outcomes
  for children/youth.
• Determine, review, and collaborate with CB regarding the selected six to eight pilot sites
  based on their meeting the target population requirements and the ability of the state,
  county, territory, or tribal child welfare system to engage with the QIC and meet the
  programmatic requirements. All sites must receive final approval from the CB Federal
  Project Officer.
• Develop a Phase II Implementation and Evaluation Plan for review and approval from
  the CB Federal Project Officer.

Phase II: Implementation and Evaluation (Years 2-5)
Phase II will include implementation, evaluation, and assurance of sustainability in each of the
six to eight pilot sites. In Phase I: Planning, the QIC/EY must develop and submit a Phase II
Implementation and Evaluation Plan for implementing a project in each of the six to eight
selected and approved sites. This plan must build on knowledge gained from promising
practices in the field and the review of state, county, territory, or tribal child welfare systems
described above. The Phase II: Implementation and Evaluation Plan with any revisions and site
selection is due 9 months after the award of the cooperative agreement and must include, at a
minimum, the following components:
• The results of the review of state, county, tribal, and territory child welfare systems.
• The results of the review of effective strategies to provide enhanced evidence-based and evidence-informed models of youth engagement.
• An administrative structure for implementing each pilot and the plan for utilizing evidence-based components and strategies.
• A plan for technical assistance to selected pilot sites for support and evaluation by the QIC/EY; the QIC/EY will be required to not only monitor the operations of the projects, but also provide ongoing support, guidance, and technical assistance to assist them in project implementation, data collection, and evaluation.
• The design of an administrative and management structure for ensuring that pilot sites implement their projects within 90 days of their selection by the QIC and for monitoring the projects, including ensuring accountability from the pilot sites.
• A description of mechanisms for forming and maintaining a method of information sharing and collaboration between pilot sites.
• A methodology for providing a local evaluation for the demonstration projects ensuring that projects and participating organizations collect appropriate qualitative and quantitative process and outcome data.
• The identification of linkages with appropriate organizations and resources.
• A strategy for information dissemination.

Target Population
The project will target two populations to include children and youth, and the child welfare workforce.

Target 1: Children and youth in the care of the selected pilot site child welfare systems awaiting some form of permanency (reunification, adoption, guardianship, or other planned living arrangement) with particular emphasis on older teens in care (14 years and older).

Target 2: Child welfare system workforce that serves children/youth in care of the child welfare system pilot sites with particular focus on those that are primarily responsible for ensuring that children/youth attain permanency in a timely manner.

Collaboration
The successful applicant will collaborate with CB and other partners to achieve the purposes of this FOA. The QIC/EY will collaborate with agencies and organizations with which partnerships are critical to successfully implement the proposed project. Required collaboration will include the state, county, or tribal child welfare systems chosen as pilot sites, because of their role in implementing the youth engagement models and workforce development.

In many cases, strong partnerships with private service providers under contract with the child welfare agency, courts, schools, law enforcement, and/or community-based organizations may be equally important to the success of the project. The partners involved may vary significantly, depending on the selected pilot site structure and plan for implementation.

Evaluation
The QIC/EY funded under this grant will contribute to the development of a knowledge base of successful strategies for transforming the way the child welfare workforce engages with the
youth in their care so as to ensure timely, secure, and stable permanency for all youth with the goal of no youth leaving care without a permanent home. The following criteria are expected to be evaluated: the development of the capacity of the workforce and their employment of specific youth engagement models to ensure youth are engaged in their own permanency, and the effective and authentic integration of the youth voice throughout the system of care.

The QIC/EY will provide for both an evaluation of the QIC/EY as a structure and the design and implementation of the evaluations for each pilot site. These evaluations will be guided by their logic model and will focus on both implementation process and outcomes.

The QIC/EY will use participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches that will help guide project assessment, planning, and implementation throughout the grant. The QIC/EY evaluation is expected to complete the following: provide regular, timely, and useful feedback to support successful implementation and treatment fidelity; contribute to the developing knowledge base about successful strategies for equipping the workforce in terms of youth engagement; and adopt, install, implement, and sustain evidence-based/evidence-informed youth engagement models.

CB is particularly interested in factors and strategies associated with successful implementation (facilitators), including the following:

- Contributions of the organizational and system conditions;
- Implementation barriers;
- Appropriateness of fit between the selected practices and the systems and settings into which they are introduced;
- Degree that implementations spread nationally and are maintained over time;
- Sustainability of the new practices and services; and
- Cost of implementation and on-going service delivery changes.

Both during and at the conclusion of the 5-year projects, the QIC/EY will be expected to answer evaluation questions for each of the six to eight pilot sites, including, but not limited to, the following six topical areas:

1. Implementation
2. System Integration
3. Service Delivery
4. Sustainability
5. Cost
6. Outcomes

The QIC/EY, in collaboration with their pilot sites, CB, and any applicable national evaluation contractor(s), must produce a comprehensive evaluation report at the conclusion of the project period and present findings to CB and other stakeholders.

The QIC/EY will have a plan for addressing protection of human subjects. General information about the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained using the link in the table under Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances and Certifications and in the Section VIII. Checklist.
**Dissemination**

The information and knowledge generated by the QIC/EY and its sub-projects will be shared with the field and efforts will be made to integrate project knowledge into policy and practice. The QIC/EY will disseminate strategically and incorporate dissemination activities into their work. Their dissemination activities will focus on key target audiences for specific purposes, understanding what they need to know, and effectively getting this information to them. The QIC/EY will ensure that projects disseminate their individual project products and findings and work with the other projects in this QIC/EY to disseminate cross project products and findings. Projects will disseminate at appropriate times. They will evaluate the extent to which their target audiences have received project knowledge, used it as intended, and assessed the impact of dissemination. They will allocate sufficient staff time for dissemination.

The QIC/EY will be expected to work throughout the course of their projects with their federal project officer to complete the following:

- Finalize the QIC/EY, and the individual pilot and cross-project dissemination goals and objectives;
- Identify and engage with target audiences for dissemination;
- Produce detailed procedures, materials, and other products based on the program evaluation; and
- Develop and disseminate summarized/synthesized information about the project.

**SUBAWARDS**

Recipients under this grant program may opt to transfer a portion of substantive programmatic work to other organizations through subaward(s). The primary recipient must maintain a substantive role in the project. ACF defines a substantive role as conducting activities and/or providing services funded under the award that are necessary and integral to the completion of the project. Subrecipient monitoring activities alone as specified in 45 CFR § 75.352 do not constitute a substantive role. Furthermore, ACF does not fund awards where the role of the applicant is primarily to serve as a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute.

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

Please reference the Award Term and Condition on Subawards on the ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements website for further requirements involving subawards.

**II. Federal Award Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Instrument Type:</th>
<th>Cooperative Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Total Funding:</td>
<td>$4,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Number of Awards:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Award Ceiling: $4,000,000 Per Budget Period
Award Floor: $3,700,000 Per Budget Period
Average Projected Award Amount: $4,000,000 Per Budget Period
Anticipated Project Start Date: 09/30/2021

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

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

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

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

The initial award will be for a 12-month budget period. The award of continuation beyond each 12-month budget period will be subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the grantee (i.e. demonstrating a commitment to achieving expected outcomes and collaborating with CB to overcome any barriers), and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the federal government.

In the first budget period, the maximum federal share of each project is not to exceed $4 million. The project awarded will be for a project period of 60 months.

Description of ACF's Anticipated Substantial Involvement Under the Cooperative Agreement
A cooperative agreement is a specific method of awarding federal assistance in which substantial federal involvement is anticipated. A cooperative agreement clearly defines the respective responsibilities of CB and the awardee prior to the award. CB anticipates that agency involvement will produce programmatic benefits to the recipient otherwise unavailable to them for carrying out the project. The involvement and collaboration includes the following:

- CB review and approval of planning stages of the activities before implementation
phases may begin;
- CB and recipient joint collaboration in the performance of key programmatic activities (i.e., strategic planning, implementation, information technology enhancements, training and technical assistance (T/TA), publications or products, and evaluation);
- CB close monitoring of the requirements stated in this announcement that limit the awardee’s discretion with respect to scope of services offered; and
- CB close monitoring of the awardee during performance, which may, in order to ensure compliance with the intent of this funding, exceed those federal stewardship responsibilities customary for grant activities.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### III.1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is unrestricted and open to public or private organizations.

CB will accept applications that represent partnerships among organizations with relevant experience. Applicants may establish subgrant and contracts with organizations specializing in their assigned tasks. Applications from collaborations must identify a primary applicant responsible for administering the cooperative agreement.

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 this part and 42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq., the Department will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate against an organization on the basis of the organization’s religious character, affiliation, or exercise.

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

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

Please see Section IV.6. Funding Restrictions for any limitations on the use of federal funds that could affect the eligibility of an applicant or project.

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

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement: No

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

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

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

### III.3. Other

**Application Disqualification Factors**
Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not
eligible and will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this
announcement.

**Award Ceiling Disqualification**
Applications that request an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period or
per project period ("per project period" refers only to fully funded awards), as stated in *Section
II. Federal Award Information*, will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding
under this announcement. This disqualification applies only to the *Award Ceiling* listed for 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**
received from applicants that have not been approved for an exemption from required
electronic submission will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding
under this announcement.**

Applicants that do not have an Internet connection or sufficient computing capacity to upload
large documents to the Internet may contact ACF for an exemption that will allow the applicant to submit applications in paper format. Information and the requirements for requesting an exemption from required electronic application submission are found in "ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Electronic Application Submission" at www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/howto#chapter-6.

Missing the Application Deadline (Late Applications)
The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 p.m., ET, on the due date listed in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times. Electronic applications submitted to www.Grant.gov after 11:59 p.m., ET, on the due date, as indicated by a dated and time-stamped email from www.Grant.gov, will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this announcement. That is, applications submitted to www.Grant.gov, on or after 12:00 a.m., ET, on the day after the due date will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this announcement.

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

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

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

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 FOA.

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

CB Operations Center
c/o LCG, Inc.
ATTN: HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911
6000 Executive Boulevard
Electronic Application Submission:
The electronic application submission package is available in the FOA's listing at www.Grants.gov.

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

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

IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

FORMATTING APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS
Each applicant applying electronically via www.Grants.gov is required to upload only two electronic files, excluding Standard Forms and OMB-approved forms. No more than two files will be accepted for the review, and additional files will be removed. Standard Forms and OMB-approved forms will not be considered additional files.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signatures
Applicants submitting electronic applications must follow the registration and application submission instructions provided at www.Grants.gov.

The original of a paper format application must include original signatures of the authorized representatives.

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

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

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

PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:
With the exception of SFs and OMB-approved forms, the application submission is limited to 100 pages in its entirety. The two files applicants must submit are as follows:

The Project Description file must include these items in this order:

1. Table of Contents
2. Project Summary  
3. Objectives and Need for Assistance  
4. Approach  
5. Evaluation  
6. Organizational Capacity  
7. Logic Model  
8. Line-Item Budget and Budget Justification

The **Appendices** file must include these items in the following order:

1. Certifications and Assurances  
2. Proof of Legal Status (if applicable)  
3. Third-party Agreements  
4. Staff and Position Data (e.g., resumes, job descriptions, organizational charts)  
5. Indirect Cost Rate Letter (if applicable)

**ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Applicants are required to submit their applications electronically unless they have requested and 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 [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). **ACF will not accept applications submitted via email or via facsimile.**

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

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

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

**Adherence to the Two-File Requirement**

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

**Application Upload Requirements**

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

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

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

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

**Required Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-approved Forms**

Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-approved forms, such as the SF-424 application and budget forms and the SF-P/PSL (Project/Performance Site Location), are uploaded separately at Grants.gov. These forms are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices files. See Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications for the listing of required Standard Forms, OMB-approved forms, and required assurances and certifications.

**Naming Application Submission Files**

Carefully observe the file naming conventions required by www.Grants.gov. Limit file names to 50 characters (characters and spaces). Special characters that are allowed under Grants.gov’s naming conventions, and are accommodated by ACF’s systems, are listed in the instructions available in the "Select Grant Opportunity Package" at Grants.gov. Please also see https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters.html.

**Use only file formats supported by ACF**

It is critical that applicants submit applications using only the supported file formats listed here. While ACF supports all of the following file formats, we strongly recommend that the two application submission files (Project Description and Appendices) are uploaded as PDF documents in order to comply with the two file upload limitation. Documents in file formats that are not supported by ACF will be removed from the application and will not be used in the competitive review. This may make the application incomplete and ACF will not make any awards based on an incomplete application.

**ACF supports the following file formats:**

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

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

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

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

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

Because each application will be duplicated, do not use or include separate covers, binders, clips, tabs, plastic inserts, maps, brochures, or any other items that cannot be processed easily on a photocopier machine with an automatic feed. Do not bind, clip, staple, or fasten in any way separate sections of the application. Applicants are advised that the copies of the application submitted, not the original, will be reproduced by the federal government for review. All application materials must be one-sided for duplication purposes. All pages in the application submission must be sequentially numbered.

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

Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

Applicants seeking grant or cooperative agreement awards under this announcement must submit the listed Standard Forms (SFs), assurances, and certifications with the application. All required Standard Forms, assurances, and certifications are available in the Application Package posted for this FOA at www.Grants.gov.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms / Assurances</th>
<th>Submission Requirement</th>
<th>Notes / Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<p>| / Certifications | Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the Overview and Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times. If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant. | Form is available at <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html</a>. General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/</a>. Applicants may also contact OHRP by email (<a href="mailto:ohrp@csophs.dhhs.gov">ohrp@csophs.dhhs.gov</a>) or by phone (240-453-6900). |
| SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance | Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date. | Required for all applications. |
| SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities | If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant. | If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and submit the SF-LLL, &quot;Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying,&quot; in accordance with its instructions. |
| Unique Entity Identifier (DUNS) and Systems for Award Management (SAM) registration. | Required of all applicants. To obtain a DUNS number, go to <a href="http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform">http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform</a>. Active registration at the SAM website must be maintained throughout the application and project award period. SAM registration is available at <a href="http://www.sam.gov">http://www.sam.gov</a>. | See Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) for more information. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)</th>
<th>Submission required of all applicants with the application package. If it is not submitted with the application package, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</th>
<th>Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs</td>
<td>Submission is required for all applicants when applying for a non-construction project. Standard Forms 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.</td>
<td>Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)</td>
<td>Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.</td>
<td>Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-424 Key Contact Form</td>
<td>Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.</td>
<td>Required for all applications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mandatory Grant Disclosure**

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

Disclosures must be sent in writing to:


And to:
Non-Federal Reviewers
Since ACF will be using non-federal reviewers in the review process, applicants have the option of omitting from the application copies (not the original) specific salary rates or amounts for individuals specified in the application budget as well as Social Security Numbers, if otherwise required for individuals. The copies may include summary salary information. If applicants are submitting their application electronically, ACF will omit the same specific salary rate information from copies made for use during the review and selection process.

The Project Description

The Project Description Overview

General Expectations and Instructions
The Project Description provides the majority of 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 FOA, 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 FOA.

Letter of Intent

Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify ACF of their intention to submit an application under this announcement. 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 announcement; the name and address of the applicant organization; and the name, phone number, fax number and email address of a contact person.

Letter of intent information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications. The letter of intent is optional. Failure to submit a letter of intent will not impact eligibility to submit an application and will not disqualify an application from
competitive review.
CB Operations Center
c/o LCG, Inc.
ATTN: HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CW-1921
6000 Executive Boulevard
Suite 410
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (888) 203-6161
Email: CB@grantreview.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

Non-profit organizations 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).

Need For Assistance

Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s) requiring a solution. The need for assistance, including the nature and scope of the problem, must be demonstrated. Supporting documentation, such as letters of support and testimonials from concerned parties, may be included in the Appendix. Any relevant data based on planning studies or needs assessments should be included or referred to in the endnotes or footnotes. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as available.

Objectives

Clearly state the principal and subordinate objectives of the project. Applicants must address how the objectives stated relate to the overall purpose of the program and describe how objectives will be achieved.

The applicant must describe how successful implementation of their proposed project would result in the following:

• The development and enhancement of the evidence-base for models of engaging youth in achieving their own permanency and in assuring relational permanency with kin and other key relationships can be replicated in other child welfare systems to achieve long-term, stable permanency;
• The production of one overall training/coaching/capacity building tool for the workforce that will be utilized consistently across pilot sites and integrated into their pre-service training, as well as a stand-alone training for the casework staff with the goal of altering the mindset and practice of effective, authentic youth engagement throughout the child welfare system;
• The refinement of the training/capacity building model through the course of the funding period with the goal of being a replicable tool for other jurisdictions;
• The incorporation of effective and authentic integration of the youth voice throughout the child welfare system;
• The generation and dissemination of knowledge on effective practice models of youth engagement and child welfare workforce training to achieve the goals of this project; and
• The support of innovative, collaborative, and effective practices in the development of each of the above stated elements and strategies determined in each of the pilot sites.

Expected Outcomes

Identify the outcomes to be achieved from the project. Outcomes should relate to the overall program as described in Section I. Program Description. If research is part of the proposed work, outcomes must include hypothesized results and implications of the proposed research.

Approach

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

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

Applicants must clearly articulate how their proposed Center will fulfill the following, as described in Section I. Program Description, Project Requirements:

• Achieve expected outcomes;
• Carry out the QIC responsibilities;
• Meet the target population requirements;
• Meet the collaboration requirements; and
• Meet the dissemination requirements.

The applicant must demonstrate the involvement of youth currently in care of the child welfare system and/or recently egressed from the care of the child welfare system (by reunification, adoption, guardianship, or independence) in the development of the application. The applicant must also clearly specify plans for the involvement of youth/young adult involvement in the overall operation of the QIC/EY and the pilot sites.

The applicant must describe an approach that will take place in the following two phases: Phase I, Planning; and Phase II, Implementation and Evaluation. For both phases, the applicant must propose a sound management plan that describes the scope and detail of planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies and activities to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget in that phase. The plan must include clearly defined responsibilities for the QIC/EY, the pilot sites, and all partners/consultants, and must clearly define timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks and ensuring quality. The plan must clearly describe the effective management and coordination of activities carried out by any partners/consultants.

Phase I: Planning and Site Selection (Year 1)

Applicants must describe how they will perform, at a minimum, the following functions during the initial 12-month planning process:
• Research and develop basic competencies and a training/coaching/capacity building tool that will be utilized consistently in all pilot sites that will be integrated into pre-service training as well as applied throughout the system for casework staff.

• Research, develop, and select state-of-the-art youth engagement models that provide authentic means of engaging youth in determining their own permanency and in assuring relational permanency with kin and other key relationships that can be applied in the various pilot sites.

• Select six to eight pilot sites representing different jurisdictions and led by a public child welfare system at the state, county, tribal, or territory level. Sites should be representative of child welfare systems of varying sizes that also reflect a mix of urban and rural settings. At least one site will be a child welfare system that serves more than 20,000 children/youth in each year; at least one site will serve fewer than 5,000 children/youth each year; and the remaining sites, including child welfare systems, will serve between 5,000-20,000 children/youth each year. **Applicants must describe an approach that will include the following in their selection of pilot sites:**
  
  o Analysis of the number of youth awaiting adoption/guardianship, especially the number of adolescents 14 years of age and older awaiting permanency;
  
  o Assessment of the ability of potential site systems for their openness and readiness for change;
  
  o Assessment of the sites’ systems to support implementation, including a structure for site consultants and in-house staff who will be able to dedicate 100 percent of their time to the work of this pilot;
  
  o Setting of realistic expectations with the sites about the scope of work that is required considering the goals related to transformational systemic change;
  
  o Assurance of a strong support for commitment to the elements of this project and for the need for cultural change throughout the system from the child welfare system’s leadership; and
  
  o Assessment of the state, county, tribal, or territory child welfare system pilot site’s ability to engage with the QIC/EY and meet the programmatic requirements.

• With each pilot site, determine a plan for the infusion of the training/coaching/capacity building work to inculcate the child welfare system and produce transformation in the workforce. Include the manner in which the system embraces the youth voice to identify barriers and builds strategies for improved permanency outcomes and enhanced relational permanency for children/youth.

• Determine the youth engagement model that will be utilized within each pilot site’s given system.

• With each pilot site, determine the plan for systemic change that will ensure the youth voice is embraced, identify barriers, and build strategies for improved permanency outcomes for children/youth.

• Determine, review, and collaborate with CB regarding the six to eight pilot sites that will be selected based on their meeting the target population requirements and the ability of the state, county, territory, or tribal child welfare system to engage with the QIC and meet the programmatic requirements.

• Develop a Phase II Implementation and Evaluation Plan for review and approval from
the CB Federal Project Officer within the first 9 months of the project period.

In Phase I: Planning, the QIC/EY must develop and submit a Phase II Implementation and Evaluation Plan for implementing a project in each of the six to eight selected and approved sites. This plan must build on knowledge gained from promising practices in the field and the review of state, county, territory, or tribal child welfare systems described above. Applicants must submit a preliminary design for Phase II in this application that presents a clear and comprehensive vision of how the proposed QIC/EY would operate. Applicants must describe the approach and processes they would use to develop the implementation plan and address anticipated logistical and administrative issues.

Phase II: Implementation and Evaluation (Years 2-5)

As described in Section I. Program Description, Project Requirements, Evaluation, applicants must describe how they will perform the following functions to occur during years 2-5 that includes implementation, evaluation, assurance of sustainability, and dissemination:

- Pilot test and integrate the training/coaching/capacity building model consistently in each pilot site so as to infuse the model into the structure and practice of the system to ensure sustainability;
- Pilot test the youth engagement models in each pilot site;
- Provide technical assistance to each pilot state, county, tribe, or territory for the integration of the models of training and youth engagement throughout their respective systems;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the training and youth engagement models as well as the QIC/EY; and
- Generate and disseminate knowledge on effective practice models of engagement and on the effective elements required to impact the workforce on embracing the engagement principles.

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);
- Copy or description of the applicant organization's fiscal control and accountability procedures;
• 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 announcement;
• Evidence that each participating organization, including partners, contractors and/or subrecipients, possess the organizational capability to fulfill their role(s) and function(s) effectively.
• Job descriptions for each vacant key position.

The applicant must demonstrate they possess the following:

• Experience working with child welfare agencies in a manner similar to the scope of this project;
• Experience with developing child welfare trainings; and
• Knowledge and experience with engaging children and youth in decisions impacting their experience with the child welfare system.

The applicant must also describe the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed project staff position, including consultants, subcontractors, and/or partners, are clearly defined (e.g., job description) and appropriate to the successful implementation of the proposed project.

If known at the time of application submission, the applicant must disclose their intent to enter into subaward arrangements in their application. For each proposed subaward, the applicant must include a description of the work to be performed by the subrecipient(s). Applicants are not expected to select pilot sites through a formal bidding process.

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

Grantees are required to ensure proper oversight in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D. These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

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

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

Applicants must describe a plan for the program performance evaluation that will contribute to continuous quality improvement. The program performance evaluation must monitor ongoing activities and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project. Include descriptions of the inputs (e.g., organizational profile, collaborative partners, key staff, budget, and other resources), key activities, and expected outcomes of the funded activities. The plan must explain how the inputs, activities, and outcomes will be measured; how the resulting information will be used to inform improvement of funded activities; and any processes that support the overall data quality of the performance outcomes.

Applicants must describe the organizational systems and processes that will effectively track performance outcomes, including a description of how the organization will collect and manage data (e.g., assign skilled staff, data management software, data integrity, etc.) in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes. Applicants must describe any potential obstacles for implementing the program performance evaluation and how those obstacles will be addressed. Applicants must include a timeline for how information from the quality improvement evaluation will be reviewed and applied to the ongoing project.

Applicants must describe how their proposed QIC will carry out the evaluation requirements as described in Section I. Program Description, Project Requirements, Evaluation.

Applicants must present an evaluation plan that will contribute to developing the knowledge base about successful strategies for achieving and maintaining youth engagement throughout the child welfare system at the individual and system levels. Both the development of the capacity of the workforce and their employment of specific youth engagement models to ensure youth engaged in their own permanency are expected to be evaluated.

The described plan must be feasible, comprehensive, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and context of the project. The applicant’s evaluation plan must include the following:

- Discuss how the applicant will evaluate the structure of the QIC and the design and evaluation of the pilot sites;
- Describe how the QIC/EY, in collaboration with their pilot sites, CB, and any applicable national evaluation contractor(s), will produce a comprehensive evaluation report at the conclusion of the project period and present findings to CB and other stakeholders;
- Describe how the evaluation will provide periodic, timely, and useful performance feedback to support successful implementation and treatment fidelity in order to make necessary program adjustments; contribute to the developing knowledge base about successful strategies for equipping the workforce in terms of youth engagement; and adopt, install, implement, and sustain evidence-based/evidence-informed youth engagement models;
- Articulate how the evaluations will be guided by their logic model and will focus on both implementation process and outcomes;
- Articulate the proposed evaluation methods, measurement, data collection, data management system, sample and sampling (if appropriate), timeline for activities, plan for securing IRB review, if applicable, and ongoing analysis for the QIC and each of the pilot sites;
• Describe a feasible method to produce data that can be compared to, and contrasted between, the selected pilot sites and other state, county, tribal, and territory child welfare systems;
• Describe how the evaluation plan would measure achievement of objectives and competencies; yield useful findings about effective strategies; and contribute to, promote, and enhance the evidence-base of the practices that could be used to guide replication in other settings;
• Describe how the applicant will assess the degree to which the developed training/coaching and capacity building instrument(s) results in the child welfare workforce’s increased understanding of the importance of, and enhanced capacity of, authentic youth engagement and relationship-building;
• Describe how the applicant will assess the degree to which systemic change through intentional policy, practice, and culture shifts within the child welfare system, related service providers, and the courts that promote the authentic engagement of youth throughout the continuation of care of the child welfare system;
• Describe strategies and circumstances that may positively or negatively impact implementation, cost, maintenance, and sustainability of the project, including contributing organizational and systemic conditions;
• Discuss how the selected practices are appropriate in the systems and settings into which they are introduced;
• Propose an appropriate sampling plan that ensures sample sizes sufficient to detect significant effects and represents the intended recipients of the services;
• Describe how the evaluation will use participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches that will help guide project assessment, planning, and implementation throughout the grant; and
• Identify the evaluator, cost of the evaluation, and the source of funds. If the applicant does not have the in-house capacity to conduct an objective, comprehensive evaluation, then the applicant will subcontract with an institution of higher education or a third-party evaluator specializing in social sciences research and evaluation to conduct the evaluation. In either case, it is important that the evaluators have the necessary independence from the project to ensure objectivity. A skilled evaluator can help develop a logic model and ensure the evaluation strategy is appropriate given the goals and objects of the proposed project. Provide evidence of the evaluators qualifications to undertake the proposed work.

Logic Model

Applicants must submit a logic model for designing and managing their project. A logic model is a diagram that presents the conceptual framework for a proposed project and explains the links among program elements. Logic models must target the identified objectives and goals of the grant program. While there are many versions of logic models, for the purposes of this announcement, the logic model may include connections between the following items:

• Inputs (e.g., additional resources, organizational profile, collaborative partner(s), key staff, budget);
• Target population (e.g., the individuals to be served, identified needs);
• Activities, Mechanisms, Processes (e.g., evidence-based practices, best practices, approach, key intervention and evaluation components, continuous quality improvement efforts);
• Outputs (i.e., the immediate and direct results of program activities);
• Outcomes (i.e., the expected short and long-term results the project is designed to achieve, typically described as changes in people or systems), and
• Goals of the project (e.g., overarching objectives, reasons for proposing the project).

The applicant’s logic model must illustrate the applicant’s approach to the project, including the implementation process, and describe the outcomes to be achieved. The applicant’s logic model must also demonstrate how the proposed activities are culturally relevant, align with the approach, and have a clear connection to the identified outcomes.

**Project Sustainability Plan**

Applicants must propose a plan for project sustainability after the period of federal funding ends. Grantees are expected to sustain key elements of their grant projects, e.g., strategies or services and interventions, which have been effective in improving practices and outcomes.

Describe the approach to project sustainability that will be most effective and feasible. Provide a description of key individuals and/or organizations whose support will be required. Address the types of alternative support that will be required to maintain the program. If the proposed project involves key project partners, describe how their cooperation and/or collaboration will be maintained after the end of federal funding.

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

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

**Dissemination Plan**

Applicants must propose a plan to disseminate reports, products, and/or grant project outputs so that project information is provided to key target audiences. Dissemination plans must include:

- Dissemination goals and objectives;
- Strategies to identify and engage with target audiences;
- Allocation of sufficient staff time and budget for dissemination purposes;
- A preliminary plan to evaluate the extent to which target audiences have received project information and have used it as intended, and
- The timeline for dissemination.

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

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

**Letters of Support**

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

**The Project Budget and Budget Justification**

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

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

**Special Note:** The Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2021 and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this announcement may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. The Executive Level II salary of the "Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule" is $199,300. This amount reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits 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
Provide a budget using the SF-424A and/or SF-424C, as applicable, for each year of the proposed project. Provide a budget justification, which includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail, for each year of the proposed project. The budget narrative should describe how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of the proposed costs.

The application’s budget must include funds for all required items for the project, including funds to support potential travel for the following: within 3 months after the award, the project director, child welfare liaison (if different from the project director), evaluator and/or other key staff must attend a 1 day kick-off meeting in Washington, DC; and the project director, the child welfare agency liaison (if different from the project director), and the evaluator and/or other key staff must attend annual grantee meetings in Washington, DC. In the event of an extension of the public health emergency due to COVID-19, these meetings may be held virtually. Applicants should specify in their budgets funds for technology to assist in attending virtual meetings such as software, cameras, computers, and other needs.

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

General
Use the following guidelines for preparing the project budget and budget justification. The budget justification includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail. Applications should only include allowable costs in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

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

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

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

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

**Justification:** Provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) 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/grantee orientations should be detailed in the budget justification.

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

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

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

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

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

Justification: Demonstrate that all procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open, and free competition. Applicants must justify any anticipated procurement action that is expected to be awarded without competition and exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold stated in 48 CFR Subpart 2.1. Recipients may be required to make pre-award review and procurement documents, such as requests for proposals or invitations for bids, independent cost estimates, etc., available to ACF.

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

Other

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

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

Indirect Charges

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

1. The applicant currently has an indirect cost rate approved by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or another cognizant federal agency.

Justification: An applicant must enclose a copy of the current approved rate agreement. If the applicant is requesting a rate that is less than what is allowed under the program, the authorized representative of the applicant organization must submit a signed acknowledgement that the applicant is accepting a lower rate than allowed. Choosing to charge a lower rate will not be considered during the objective review or award selection process.
2. Per 45 CFR § 75.414(f) Indirect (F&A) costs, "any non-Federal entity [i.e., applicant] that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, ... may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described in Section 75.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as the non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time."

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

**Commitment of Non-Federal Resources**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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 02/28/2022. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Application Submission Options**

**Electronic Submission via www.Grants.gov**
This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for ACF program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

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

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

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.
Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

**Obtain a DUNS Number:** All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizations DUNS" on the SF-424 form.

For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS number, refer to:

**Register with SAM:** In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the System for Award Management (SAM). All organizations must register with SAM in order to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

**Create a Grants.gov Account:** The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the AOR role.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html

**Authorize Grants.gov Roles:** After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying them of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of your organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html

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

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

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

The following is an overview of applying via Grants.gov. For access to complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to: [https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html](https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html)

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

*Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.

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

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

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

*Complete SF-424 Fields First:* The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

*Submit a Workspace:* An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application at least **24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

*Track a Workspace:* After successfully submitting a workspace package, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the package. The
number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission.

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

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

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

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

When ACF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submission, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by ACF.

Applicants with slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

**Issues with Federal Systems**

**Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission**
To request an exemption from required electronic submission please refer to ACF’s “Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission” document for complete guidance at:
www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/acf_policy_for_requesting_an_exemption_from_r
Paper Format Application Submission
An exemption is required for the submission of paper applications. See the preceding section on "Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission."

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

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

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

All applicants must have a DUNS Number (http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform) and an active registration with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov/SAM, https://www.sam.gov).

Obtaining a DUNS Number may take 1 to 2 days.

All applicants are required to maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If a grant is awarded, registration at SAM must be active throughout the life of the award.

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

This action should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in your inability to submit your application through Grants.gov or prevent the award of a grant. Applicants should maintain documentation (with dates) of their efforts to register for, or renew a registration, at SAM. User Guides are available under the “Help” tab at https://www.sam.gov.

HHS requires all entities that plan to apply for, and ultimately receive, federal grant funds from any HHS Agency, or receive subawards directly from recipients of those grant funds to:

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

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.

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**Due Date for Letter of Intent**
Due Date for Letter of Intent: 06/06/2021
Due Date for Applications: 07/06/2021

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

**Electronic Applications**
The deadline for submission of electronic applications via www.Grants.gov is 11:59 p.m., ET, on the due date. Electronic applications submitted at 12:00 a.m., ET, on the day after the due date will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this announcement.

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

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


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

**Mailed Paper Format Applications**
The deadline for receipt of mailed, paper applications is 4:30 p.m., ET, on the due date. Mailed paper applications received after the due date and deadline time will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this announcement.
Paper format application submissions will be disqualified if the applicant organization has not received an exemption through the process described in Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission.

Hand-Delivered Paper Format Applications
Applications that are hand-delivered by applicants, applicant couriers, by overnight/express mail couriers, or other representatives of the applicant must be received on, or before, the due date listed in the Overview and in this section. These applications must be delivered between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., ET, Monday through Friday (excluding federal holidays). Applications should be delivered to the address provided in Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Applicants will also receive an email acknowledging that the received application is in the Grants.gov validation process, after which a third email is sent with the information that the submitted application package has passed, or failed, the series of checks and validations. Applications that are submitted on time that fail the validation check will not be transmitted to ACF and will not be acknowledged by ACF.

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

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

IV.5. Intergovernmental Review

This program is covered under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," and 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities." Under the Executive Order, States may design their own processes for reviewing and commenting on proposed Federal assistance under covered programs.

Applicants should go to the following URL for the official list of the jurisdictions that have elected to participate in E.O. 12372 https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/grants_sproc. Applicants from participating jurisdictions should contact their SPOC, as soon as possible, to alert them of their prospective applications and to receive instructions on their jurisdiction's procedures. Applicants must submit all required application materials to the SPOC and indicate the date of submission on the Standard Form (SF) 424 at item 19.

Under 45 CFR 100.8(a)(2), a SPOC has 60 days from the application due date to comment on proposed new awards.

SPOC comments may be submitted directly to ACF to: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Grants Management, Division of Discretionary Grants, 330 C St. SW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20201.

Entities that meet the eligibility requirements of this announcement are still eligible to apply for a grant even if a State, Territory or Commonwealth, etc., does not have a SPOC or has chosen not to participate in the process. Applicants from non-participating jurisdictions need take no
action with regard to E.O. 12372. Applications from Federally-recognized Indian Tribal
governments are not subject to E.O. 12372.

IV.6. Funding Restrictions

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

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

Grant awards will not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs.

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

IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

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

Submission By Mail
CB Operations Center
c/o LCG, Inc.
ATTN: HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911
6000 Executive Boulevard
Suite 410
Rockville, MD 20852

Hand Delivery
CB Operations Center
c/o LCG, Inc.
ATTN: HHS-2021-ACF-ACYF-CO-1911
6000 Executive Boulevard
Suite 410
Rockville, MD 20852
**Electronic Submission**
For all submissions, see *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

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**V. Application Review Information**

**V.1. Criteria**

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives and Need for Assistance</th>
<th>Maximum Points:20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In reviewing the objectives and need for assistance, reviewers will consider the extent to which:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The application demonstrates a clear linkage between project activities and the authorizing legislation.
2. The application demonstrates a thorough understanding of the need to improve the capacity of the child welfare workforce in regards to youth engagement; to effectively and authentically incorporate the youth voice in all aspects of the child welfare system; and to advance the evidence-base of models of youth engagement in determining their permanency options, in attaining safe and stable permanency’s, and in assuring their relational permanency with kin and other key relationships.
3. The application demonstrates a thorough understanding of the importance of selecting six to eight pilot sites in state, county, tribal, or territory child welfare systems and the sites’ roles in impacting overall child welfare system improvement.
4. The application demonstrates clear and concise understanding of the role of the QIC/EY in implementing the proposed project.
5. The application includes a clear statement of the goals (i.e., the intended end products of an effective project) and objectives (i.e., measurable steps for reaching these goals)
of the proposed project; the statement demonstrates an understanding of the goals and objectives of this FOA, as reflected in Section IV.2. The Project Description, Objectives.

6. The application clearly describes how the QIC/EY would define, develop, and implement each project to ensure key partnerships and collaborations are achieved for accessing needed services and impacting systemic change to achieve desired results for the target population.

7. The application clearly describes how the production of one overall training/coaching/capacity building tool for the workforce will be utilized consistently across pilot sites and integrated into their pre-service training and a stand-alone training for the casework staff so as to alter the mindset and practice of effective, authentic youth engagement throughout the child welfare system.

8. The application describes how the youth voice, as represented by youth/young adults who have experienced the child welfare system, was engaged in the preparation of the application.

### Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maximum Points:35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In reviewing the approach, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The application provides a reasonable timeline for implementing the proposed project, including major milestones and target dates related to project implementation.
2. The application clearly describes the factors that could speed or hinder project implementation and convincingly explains how these factors would be managed.
3. The approach addresses each of the planning period and implementation period requirements listed in this FOA, including a detailed description of the activities the program proposes to implement during the planning period and during the implementation period.
4. The proposed approach clearly addresses each of the items listed in Section IV.2. Project Description, Approach, including a detailed description of the activities the program proposes to undertake during both the planning and implementation periods.
5. The application presents a strong analytical approach to developing and implementing a plan to select six to eight project pilot sites.
6. The application clearly describes how the QIC/EY will engage and incorporate the youth voice into the operation of the QIC/EY as well into the planning and operation of each of the pilot sites.
7. The application describes a sound approach for how the QIC/EY will ensure that the pilot sites are led by public child welfare systems at the state, tribal, and/or territory and will take an active role in the project throughout the entire length of the project.
8. The applicant proposes a feasible method to enhance child welfare agency capacity to serve the target population, and improve policy, processes, practices, and functional outcomes for the target populations with an emphasis on improving permanency outcomes.
9. The project is clearly innovative and would definitely lead to increased knowledge or understanding of the engagement of youth as addressed by this FOA.
10. The application clearly defines the generation and dissemination of knowledge on effective practice models of youth engagement and child welfare workforce training to
achieve the goals of this project.

11. The intended audience (e.g., researchers, policymakers, practitioners) for dissemination of products and findings and the dissemination plan are clearly appropriate to the goals of the proposed project.

### Evaluation

**Maximum Points: 20**

In reviewing the evaluation plan, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The plan describes how the QIC/EY, in collaboration with their pilot sites, CB, and any applicable national evaluation contractor(s), will produce a comprehensive evaluation report at the conclusion of the project period and present findings to CB and other stakeholders.
2. The plan describes how the evaluation will use participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches that will help guide project assessment, planning, and implementation throughout the grant.
3. The methods of evaluation are clearly feasible, comprehensive, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and context of the project.
4. The applicant's evaluation plan would address both the evaluation of the operation of the QIC/EY as well as an evaluation of each of the pilot sites.
5. The applicant proposes a feasible plan to produce findings or results about effective strategies and contribute to and promote evaluation research and evidence-based practices that may be used to guide replication or testing in other settings.
6. The evaluation of the QIC/EY and each of its’ pilot sites would measure achievement of objectives, acquisition of competencies, and effectiveness of project strategies.
7. The methods of evaluation would provide performance feedback, support periodic assessment of program progress, and provide a sound basis for program adjustments.
8. The plan clearly outlines an appropriate sampling plan that ensures sample sizes sufficient to detect significant effects and reflects the intended recipients of the services to the greatest extent possible given the project's structure and resources.
9. The methods of evaluation include the use of strong measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the program as identified in the project logic model.
10. The applicant proposes a feasible method to produce data that can be compared to and contrasted between the selected pilot sites and other state, tribal, and territory child welfare systems.
11. The applicant either demonstrates that the applicant has the in-house capacity to conduct an objective and rigorous evaluation of the project or presents a sound method for contracting with a third-party evaluator.
12. The proposed evaluator has extensive experience with research and/or evaluation, clearly understands the population of interest, and demonstrates the necessary independence from the project to ensure objectivity.

### Organizational Capacity

**Maximum Points: 20**

In reviewing the organizational profiles, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

1. The proposed QIC/EY has extensive, relevant experience and expertise with the administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of similar
child welfare system programs.
2. The proposed project director and key project staff demonstrate the extensive relevant knowledge, experience, and capabilities (e.g., resume) needed to effectively institute and manage a project of this size, scope, and complexity.
3. The role, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed project staff position, including consultants, subcontractors, and/or partners, are clearly defined (e.g., job description) and appropriate to the successful implementation of the proposed project.
4. The applicant clearly demonstrates how the QIC/EY has the experience and will have the capacity to work in partnership with state, tribal, and territory child welfare systems in the development of the pilot sites.
5. The plan clearly shows how the project would accomplish its objectives on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks and ensuring quality.
6. The plan clearly describes the effective management and coordination of activities carried out by the individual pilot sites to be selected during the planning period as well as any other partners, subcontractors, and consultants.

### Budget and Budget Justification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget and Budget Justification</th>
<th>Maximum Points:5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In reviewing the budget, reviewers will consider the extent to which:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. There is a detailed budget and budget narrative justification for each year of the project. The costs of the proposed project are reasonable, in view of the activities to be conducted and expected results and benefits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The applicant allocates sufficient funds to support all required items for the project, including funding to support pilot sites and the anticipated activities of proposed project partners, as applicable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The application includes funds for all required items for the project budget, including travel to attend the entrance conference and annual meeting in Washington, DC.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The applicant provides a budget for the evaluation and provides a rationale showing that the budgeted amount is sufficient to conduct the proposed evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The applicant's fiscal controls and accounting procedures would ensure prudent use, proper and timely disbursement, and accurate accounting of funds received under this FOA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### V.2. Review and Selection Process

No grant award will be made under this announcement on the basis of an incomplete application. No grant award will be made to an applicant or subrecipient that does not have a DUNS number ([http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform](http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform)) and an active registration at SAM ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). See Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM).

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

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

**Objective Review and Results**

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

Results of the competitive objective review are taken into consideration by ACF in the selection of projects for funding; however, objective review scores and rankings are not binding. Scores and rankings are only one element used in the award decision-making process. ACF reserves the right to evaluate applications in the larger context of the overall portfolio by considering geographic distribution of federal funds (e.g., ensuring coverage of states, counties, or service areas) in its pre-award decisions.

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

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

ACF may refuse funding for projects with what it regards as unreasonably high start-up costs for facilities or equipment, or for projects with unreasonably high operating costs. ACF may elect not to fund applicants and/or partnering organizations that have previously demonstrated an inability to adhere to ACF reporting requirements.

Applications may be funded, in whole or in part depending on the following factors: (1) the ranked order of applicants resulting from the competitive review; (2) staff review and consultations; (3) the project that best meets the goals of the funding opportunity as listed in Section I. Project Description; (4) the funds available; and (5) the best interests of the federal government.

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

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

Please refer to Section IV.2. of this announcement for information on non-federal reviewers in the review process.

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

V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

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

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

VI.1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a Notice of Award (NoA) that sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions of the grant, the effective date of the grant, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The NoA will be signed by the Grants Officer and transmitted via postal mail, email, or by GrantSolutions.gov or the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), whichever is relevant. Following the finalization of funding decisions, organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified by letter signed by the cognizant Program Office head. Any other correspondence that announces to a Principal Investigator, or a Project Director, that an application was selected is not an authorization to begin performance.

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

Grantees 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 grantee’s employees who are working on the Federal award are not fluent in English, the grantee must provide the Federal award in English and in the language(s)
VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

Please review all HHS regulatory provisions for Termination at 45 CFR § 75.372.

HHS Grants Policy Statement
The HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS) is the Department of Health and Human Services' single policy guide for discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. ACF grant awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS GPS, which covers basic grants processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as well as important agency-specific requirements. The general terms and conditions in the HHS GPS will apply as indicated unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary that are specified in the Notice of Award (NOA). The HHS GPS is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/discretionary-post-award-requirements#chapter-1.

Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations

The grantee must comply with 45 CFR Part 87 “Equal Treatment For Faith-Based Organizations,” including the requirement that all faith-based or religious organizations are eligible, on the same basis as any other organization, to participate in this and any program for which they are otherwise eligible. Thus, when selecting service providers or subrecipients, it may not discriminate for or against any organization on the basis of the organization's religious character or affiliation as indicated in 45 CFR § 87.3(a).

A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the 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)), the 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 may not use direct financial assistance from the Department to engage in any explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization). Consistent with 45 CFR 87.3(d), Such an organization also may not, in providing services funded by the Department, 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.

**VI.3. Reporting**

Performance Progress Semi-Annually Reports:

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

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

Financial Reports: Semi-Annually

**VII. HHS Awarding Agency Contact(s)**

**Program Office Contact**
June Dorn
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau
CB Operations Center c/o LCG, Inc.
6000 Executive Boulevard, Suite 410
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (888) 203-6161
Email: [CB@grantreview.org](mailto:CB@grantreview.org)

**Office of Grants Management Contact**
Katrina Morgan
VIII. Other Information

**Reference Websites**


Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [www.acf.hhs.gov/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/).

ACF Funding Opportunities Forecast [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/).


ACF "How To Apply For A Grant" [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/howto](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/howto).


**Application Checklist**

Applicants may use this checklist as a guide when preparing an application package.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to Submit</th>
<th>Where Found</th>
<th>When to Submit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Intent</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. <em>Project Description.</em></td>
<td>Submission is due by the Letter of Intent due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non- Construction Programs</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. <em>Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</em> These forms are available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="https://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> in the Mandatory section. They are required for applications that include only non-construction activities.</td>
<td>Submission is due by the application due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities</td>
<td>&quot;Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying&quot; is referenced in Section IV.2. <em>Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</em> This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="https://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a>.</td>
<td>If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-424 Key Contact Form</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. <em>Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</em> This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="https://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a>.</td>
<td>Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. <em>Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</em> This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="https://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a>.</td>
<td>Submission is due with the application package or prior to the award of a grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>Referenced in Section</td>
<td>A DUNS number (Unique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entity Identifier (DUNS) and Systems for Award Management (SAM) registration.</td>
<td>IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) in the announcement. To obtain a DUNS number (Unique Entity Identifier), go to <a href="http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform">http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform</a>. To register at SAM, go to <a href="http://www.sam.gov">http://www.sam.gov</a>.</td>
<td>Entity Identifier) and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants. Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications. This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a>.</td>
<td>Submission is due by the application due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications. This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a>.</td>
<td>Submission is due by the application due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof of Non-Profit Status</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity.</td>
<td>Proof of non-profit status should be submitted with the application package by the application due date and time listed in the Overview and Section IV.4. of the FOA. If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. The Project Description.</td>
<td>Submit with the application by the due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Summary</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. The Project Description.</td>
<td>Submission is due by the application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>The Project Summary is limited to one single-spaced page.</td>
<td>due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
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<td>The Project Description</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. The Project Description.</td>
<td>Submission is due by the application due date found in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Project Budget and Budget Justification</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification.</td>
<td>Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C. Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the Overview and in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)</td>
<td>Referenced in Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications. See <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html</a> for additional information. This form is available in the FOA's forms package at <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a></td>
<td>Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the Overview and Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times. If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Grant Disclosure</td>
<td>Requirement, submission instructions, and mailing addresses are found in the &quot;Mandatory Grant Disclosure&quot; in Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications.</td>
<td>If applicable, concurrent submission to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Office of the Inspector General is required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>