



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Community Services | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs

Community Services Block Grant

Dear Colleague Letter

DCL#: CSBG-DCL-2022-07
DATE: November 9, 2021
TO: CSBG Network, including Direct Funded Tribes
SUBJECT: COVID and Safety Net Innovation (CASI) TA Initiative
ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

Dear Colleagues,

The Office of Community Services (OCS) and the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) are pleased to announce a new initiative designed to explore the resiliency of the safety net in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will explore new approaches that support the economic and social needs of vulnerable families. This initiative will support responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, its economic and socio-emotional impacts, and challenges to the current safety net, while preparing the safety net for future, unforeseen crises.

OCS and OFA invite nominations from Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) eligible entities—including Tribes and Tribal organizations—and state, county, and Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) agencies that have **documented partnerships** to participate in the *COVID and Safety Net Innovation (CASI)* Technical Assistance (TA) initiative. Selected sites will work closely with OCS and OFA and receive Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) focused on designing and planning new approaches to strengthening the safety net, including collaborative, structured partnerships across safety net programs.

Organizations may be nominated or nominate themselves. They must include a CSBG eligible entity or CSBG Direct Funded Tribal recipient that has a partnership with a federally funded state or local TANF program.

OCS has jump-started the process and reached out to a handful of States, Territories and Direct Funded Tribes to gauge interest, which is strong. States, Territories and Direct Funded Tribes

have identified approximately 40 eligible entities and Tribes to date. BLH Technologies, the prime contractor for this initiative, will be reaching out to those 40 eligible entities and Tribes to share the nomination packet. We encourage all interested CSBG eligible entities—including Tribes and Tribal organizations—and state, county, and tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) agencies that have **documented partnerships to apply**.

Organizations taking part in CASI will focus on expanding current efforts and will develop action plans that envision reimagining the safety net. These action plans will articulate innovative and responsive strategies to support low-income families, focusing on a specific, local safety net concern. CASI sites will receive Training and Technical Assistance, as well as engage in peer learning among CASI sites, and be part of a feedback loop with OCS and OFA.

This work aligns well with OCS's vision for greater system integration. We expect the lessons learned from CASI sites will be invaluable in informing OCS, OFA, and the broader field about how the levers of the safety net can best support families as we recover from COVID-19 and address future challenges.

CSBG eligible entities and Direct Funded Tribes will have the opportunity to self-nominate. If you are interested to join in on this unique opportunity, please email BLH Technologies, Inc. at CASIsites@blhtech.com. They will provide greater detail and the process for nominating your organization or Tribe, and respective TANF partner. Nominations must be submitted to CASIsites@blhtech.com **no later than 6:00 p.m. Eastern on Tuesday, December 21, 2021**.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. OCS looks forward to continuing to provide high-quality services to OCS grantees.

/s/

Charisse Johnson
Director, Division of Community Assistance
Office of Community Services