

Pre-Application Teleconference for:
CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants
Funding Opportunity HHS-2016-ACF-OPRE-YE-1177
May 20, 2016, 1-2pm EST
Transcript

SLIDE 1

- Hello, and welcome to the pre-application teleconference for funding opportunity number HHS-2016-ACF-OPRE-YE-1177: CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants
- My name is Meryl Barofsky and I work at the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, or OPRE within the Administration for Children and Families, or ACF, at the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- This teleconference is being held at 1 PM eastern on May 20, 2016 and will be archived at the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grant Project Page on the OPRE website and where you can find copy of PowerPoint slides I am walking through today. That website is listed on page 8 of the FOA, and is:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/child-care-development-block-grant-ccdbg-implementation-research-and-evaluation-planning-grants>
- All phone lines are closed and there will be no questions during this call.

SLIDE 2

- This teleconference is intended to provide prospective applicants for this funding opportunity with an overview of the funding opportunity announcement, or FOA that became public on May 9, 2016 and is currently available on www.Grants.gov and the ACF FOAs webpage at www.acf.hhs.gov/grants.
- The direct link to the announcement is also provided on this slide.
- This teleconference will attempt to clarify common applicant questions by highlighting information in the FOA. I will not be sharing any information or insights that are not already included in the FOA, we are just highlighting pieces that we think might be helpful to potential applicants. All prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to read the FOA in its entirety and to refer back to the FOA for more detailed information when preparing their applications.
- Electronic applications under this FOA are DUE no later than Friday July 8, 2016 at 11:59 PM eastern standard time.

SLIDE 3: Statutory Authority

- This grant program is authorized under the authority of Section 658(a)(5) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, as amended by Pub.L. No 113-186, codified at 42 U.S.C § 9858m(a)(5)

SLIDE 4: Eligible Applicants

- Eligible applicants under this FOA are State/Territory/Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies.
- "Lead Agency" means the state, territorial, or tribal entity designated in accordance with 45 C.F.R. §§ 98.10 and 98.16(a) to which a CCDF grant is awarded and that is accountable for the use of the funds provided.
- CCDF lead agencies may partner with local government agencies or nongovernmental agencies that administer CCDF programs on their behalf, as well as with institutions of higher education or research organizations, especially if the eligible agency does not have the in-house capacity to conduct research.

- Please note, an applicant organization may submit only one application in response to this announcement. ACF will accept only the last, on-time application submitted for the competitive review.

SLIDE 5: Overview

- This FOA will fund planning grants (Phase I) for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies to develop a research-based evaluation of the implementation of policies and administrative practices related to implementation of the new regulations under the CCDBG Act of 2014.
- These 18-month grants, with one project and budget period, will fund a planning phase that will lead to testing of the evaluations in Phase II, under a separate future FOA.
- During the period of this grant, CCDF Lead Agencies will identify the policies and/or initiatives they would like to evaluate and develop a research and evaluation plan with researchers either within their organization or with an outside partner. Formalized partnerships are not necessary at the time of application.
- These planning grants may be followed by a second competition (Phase II), under a separate FOA, to support execution of the research and evaluation plans. Only grantees from this FOA will be eligible to compete for funding to implement the research and evaluation activities as part of Phase II. Receiving funding for Phase I does not guarantee funding for Phase II.

SLIDE 6: Background

- The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a multibillion-dollar federal and state partnership administered by the Office of Child Care within the ACF to support low-income working families by providing access to affordable, high-quality, early care, and afterschool programs.
- The CCDBG Act of 2014 was signed into law November 19, 2014 and reauthorizes the CCDF program for the first time since 1996. The CCDBG Act of 2014 renews authority for CCDF through FY2020 and represents a historic re-envisioning of the program with increased focus on balancing dual purposes: promoting economic self-sufficiency for low-income families, while supporting healthy development and school readiness for children. The new law also includes specific provisions to: 1) protect the health and safety of children in childcare; 2) help parents make informed consumer choices and access information to support child development; 3) provide equal access to stable, high quality childcare for low-income children; and 4) enhance the quality of childcare and the early childhood workforce.
- The CCDBG Act of 2014 and the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that was released last year provide guidance regarding policies to carry out the provisions I just outlined in more detail, but lead agencies have flexibility in terms of the implementation of certain provisions. CCDF lead agencies may implement policies differently depending on their geography, population served or other criteria that they deem important. CCDF Lead agencies are expected to implement the new policies soon, there is a link to a list of implementation dates in Section I.A. of the FOA.

SLIDE 7: Program Purpose

- The purpose of the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants is to provide CCDF Lead Agencies the opportunity to plan for a rigorous, policy-relevant evaluation of the implementation of policies and initiatives of their choosing in response to the goals of the CCDBG Act of 2014.

- For example, lead agencies may want to evaluate the effectiveness of certain investments in quality improvement (i.e., providing targeted professional development) that are funded with the increase in quality set aside as part of the new law. This grant program is a unique opportunity for CCDF Lead Agencies to build capacity in research and evaluation and learn to use data they are already collecting to evaluate their policy choices. It will also help CCDF Lead Agencies to identify new data that can facilitate tracking of changes and outcomes at the level of the ECE programs, families and children resulting from the changes in policies and implementation of new initiatives.
- In Phase I (the current FOA), CCDF Lead Agencies will develop a research plan to evaluate implementation of key policies and initiatives of their choosing in response to the goals of the new law. Grantees will have the opportunity to work with a cohort of other funded grantees, participate in peer learning, and develop and plan for a rigorous evaluation. Grantees are also expected to participate in a process evaluation if one should take place.
- States, territories, and tribes are likely in different points in their readiness to develop a research and evaluation plan under this grant. This grant program is intended for those at all levels of readiness, those with extensive experience with research and evaluation, and those who have less experience. It is not the intention for each of the evaluation plans to be exactly the same across states, territories, and tribes, including the level of complexity and rigor. Some states may develop more complex research plans, including using the planning grant to do preliminary analyses and conducting pilot studies, while others may develop simpler designs and spend the planning grant learning about research and evaluation and solidifying new research partnerships.

SLIDE 8: Program Goals

- There are four overarching program goals of this grant program and I will discuss each one in more detail in the following slides.

SLIDE 9: To Address Issues of current relevance to CCDF decision makers

- The passage of the CCDBG Act of 2014 provides a unique opportunity for CCDF Lead Agencies to test the implementation of policies and initiatives in response to the goals of the law and evaluate these changes through rigorous research methods. Lead Agencies may choose to test different strategies of compliance with policies and use findings to implement effective practices more widely, they may choose to implement policies in different localities and evaluate the effectiveness of those policies across regions, or they may choose to evaluate the implementation of policies in other ways. Projects funded through this grant program must be led by State, Territory, or Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies, and it is expected that Lead Agency staff will be actively engaged in the projects.
- The results of the funded projects are expected to address issues that are relevant to CCDF decision makers generally, in addition to issues that are specific to a single state or locality. Collaborative projects that would explore common questions across states are permitted and encouraged.
- Examples of broad topical areas identified by the Office of Child Care are:
 - *Supporting Family Child Care Providers*
 - *Increasing Access to High Quality Care*
 - *Effective Business Practices/Subsidy Administration*
- In section I.B of the FOA, these areas are listed with some example research questions that CCDF Lead Agencies might try to answer to assess the results of their implementation efforts.

Other topics and research questions in response to implementation of the law are also encouraged.

SLIDE 10: A second goal of this grant program is to increase the capacity of CCDF Lead Agencies to plan and conduct rigorous policy relevant research

- CCDF Lead Agencies will need to implement changes to CCDF administration and policies in the next few years to comply with changes to the CCDBG Law of 2014. However, some decisions about implementation may benefit from examining different strategies. However, CCDF lead agencies may not have experience with planning and evaluating policies using rigorous research methodology.
- To improve the capacity of the individual projects, as well as the capacity of the field over time, grantees will be expected to participate in a network of CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning grantees. Network members will be expected to meet annually and communicate regularly with federal staff and other grantees to share lessons learned, identify opportunities for collaboration, and to develop collective expertise and resources to be shared with the field at large. Grantees will also be expected to work with a CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Center if one should be created and participate in a process evaluation if one should take place. In developing research plans during Phase I, grantees will consider innovative methods to understand the implementation of key provisions of the new law. For example, quasi-experimental designs, such as rapid cycle evaluation, regression discontinuity, and interrupted time-series, may be possible with administrative data collected as part of their existing data system. Grantees may also consider whether additional data collection may be appropriate for their planned research projects. Grantees are expected to participate in peer learning with the Network and Center to learn about these methods and plan for use in their own research designs where appropriate.
- While not a requirement of the application, it is expected that grantees will have a functional data system at the time of implementation for Phase II, to track child, family, and provider level information, and be able to pull data from this system to conduct the research and evaluation plan. The definition of a data system will vary across states, territories, and tribes. For the purposes of this grant program, a data system could include information on licensing, the subsidy system, professional development, QRIS, or other data collected as part of monitoring or reporting requirements. Some states, territories and tribes may collect other data. Access to a functioning data system is often a barrier for lead agencies to use their administrative data for research and evaluation. Therefore, grantees may need to upgrade or modify their data systems during the period of the grant to ensure that at the time of Phase II, it will be ready for use. That is, at the time of Phase II, grantees will be expected to pull data from their system and/or link to other data, if applicable within other systems or newly collected data. Although only limited grant funds can be used to support work upgrading the system, grantees can work together to identify critical functionalities of a data system that would support data-driven decision-making, program evaluation, and policy-relevant research.

SLIDE 11: A third goal of this grant program is to encourage collaboration among policymakers and researchers

- Grantees are expected to work with researchers either within their organization or through a partnership with an outside research organization, such as a university or research firm. While these partnerships do not have to be formalized at the time of the application, through a subcontract or memorandum of understanding, it is expected that during Phase I, these relationships will be developed and a structure will be refined. The work supported by this

grant program will be collaborative from start to finish. Together, the partners are expected to develop the research questions, agree on the research design and its implementation, establish a mechanism to discuss the results as they are obtained and direct further research, consider the practice and policy implications of the results, disseminate the results to multiple audiences, and plan for future research. On the practitioner side, relevant decision-makers from across the agency are expected to take part in this process, but so too are other relevant stakeholders. The proposed research developed as part of this grant program is of equal importance as the development of the proposed partnership and collaboration. The balance of effort devoted to each may vary by the individual partnership. For example, new partnerships may require somewhat greater efforts for developing the partnership or the type of research done. The research should be of value to both the lead agency and to building knowledge in the social policy and early care and education fields. Jointly developing the research questions helps ensure that the research will be of direct use to the lead agency, as well as to the field at large. Decision-making processes, joint accountability, and oversight should be addressed by the research partners during Phase I, including communication protocols and feedback loops at every level.

SLIDE 12: Finally, the 4th goal is to encourage active communication, networking, and interdisciplinary collaboration

- Grantees will be required to participate in the Annual Meeting of the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC), a group of researchers who have conducted research to answer childcare policy-relevant questions, currently or previously funded by ACF, and may be invited to present at meetings of CCDF administrators.

SLIDE 13: Cooperative Agreement

- The awards under this FOA will be cooperative agreements.
- Under the cooperative agreements, substantial involvement is anticipated between ACF and the grantees throughout the duration of the funded projects. ACF will monitor the project and provide technical assistance and feedback when necessary. ACF will provide leadership to maximize cooperation and collaboration among grantees, including organizing periodic consultations and teleconferences to review research activities, to share information, and to promote coordination of the project. ACF will schedule and host annual meetings for grantees, set the agenda, and coordinate activities. ACF will work collaboratively with grantees to facilitate accomplishment of project goals, including development of final technical approach and study design, identification of key data and research methods, and the establishment of any advisory committees that will guide key decisions. ACF will facilitate collaboration and coordination with other grantees, the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Center, if one should be created, ACF program offices, including the Office of Child Care and their technical assistance providers, and other contractors as necessary.

SLIDE 14: Application Submission

- Next, I will talk about the application submission, which I think is of great interest to most of those of you on the call.
- ACF requires electronic submission of applications at www.grants.gov
- Applications in response to this FOA are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 8, 2016.
- ACF does not accommodate transmission of applications by email or fax

- Applicants are required to submit their applications electronically unless they have requested and received an exemption that will allow submission in paper format.
- If you are requesting an exemption, all of that information is in the FOA, section IV.1 and IV.2 so please review those requirements

SLIDE 15: Application Submission Requirements

- All applications must be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, except footnotes, which may be Times New Roman 10-point font.
- Some application elements are exempted from double-spacing requirements. Please review the FOA for where single spacing is applicable.
- 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 peer review.

SLIDE 16: Letter of Intent

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify ACF of their intention to submit an application under this announcement.
- The letter of intent should include the following information: number and title of this announcement; the name and address of the applicant organization; and/or Fiscal Agent (if known); 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.
- Letters of intent may be submitted by email by 11:59 pm eastern on Monday May 23, 2016 to CCDBG@icfi.com, subject line: CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants – Letter of Intent.

SLIDE 17: Award Amounts

- Eligible applicants may apply for a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$75,000 per project period.
- As a reminder, these grants are for 18-months, with one project and budget period. Applicants should provide a budget and budget justification for the entire 18-month project period.
- Up to 15 cooperative agreements may be awarded under this FOA.

SLIDE 18: Application Submission Requirements

- Only two electronic files should be submitted as part of an application submission; 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. See section IV.2 for Required Forms.
- The project description file should include a Table of Contents, project summary abstract and project description. This file is limited to 60 pages.
- In the table of contents, please List the contents of the application including corresponding page numbers. The table of contents must be single spaced and will be counted against the total page limitations.
- Also, please include a Project summary Abstract: This should provide a summary of the applications project description. The summary must be clear, accurate, concise, and without reference to other parts of the application. The abstract must include a brief description of the

proposed grant project. Please include the following at the top of the abstract: project title, applicant name, address, contact phone number, email address, website (if applicable). The project abstract must be single-spaced, in TNR 12-point font, and limited to one page in length.

- The first file should contain a Project Description Narrative which I will go into more detail on the following slides
- The second file should contain all documents required in the appendices, including biographical sketches/resumes/job descriptions, organizational charts, documentation of eligibility and copies of third-party agreements if applicable.
 - Within the second file, applicants must provide documentation that they are a CCDF State, Territory, or Tribal Lead Agency, including a copy of Section 1.1 (Contact Information) of the approved CCDF Plan for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015-2016. If a change in Lead Agency is anticipated for FFY 2016-2017, provide written documentation signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the state, territory, or tribe.

Slide 19: Project Description Narrative

- The project description provides the majority of information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for available assistance. It should address the activity for which federal funds are being requested, and should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the program as described in Section I. Program Description.
- Supporting documents should be included where they can present information clearly and succinctly. When appropriate, applicants should cite the evaluation criteria that are relevant to specific components of their project description (Section V.1 of FOA). Next, I will highlight some instructions that are specific to this grant program on what to include in the project narrative. I am not going to read through all of the material on the slide, but they are listed here for your reference when putting together your applications.

Slide 20:

- In the Objectives and Need for Assistance section, applicants should 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, and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly and concisely stated; supporting documentation, any relevant data based on planning studies should be included or referred to in the endnotes/footnotes.

Slide 21:

- In the Approach section, applicants should outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed project will be accomplished. Provide a list of organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals that will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.
- Cite potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing project goals and explain strategies that will be used to address these challenges.
- The strongest applications for the planning grants will be those that demonstrate an understanding of the two Phase process, present information on the activities to be completed during the planning grant, and describe how the planning process will lead to the data and information needed to submit a competitive application for implementation funding in Phase II.
- Applicants must address all of the core activities to be completed during Phase, and explain how findings/results of those activities will lead to the development of a strong plan for Phase II.

- Please review slide for additional information that should be included in applications and is listed in more detail in Section IV.2 of the FOA

SLIDE 22:

- In the Organizational Capacity section, applicants should include information on the items listed in this slide and found in Section IV.2 of the FOA

SLIDE 23:

- 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, according to the directions provided with the forms. The budget justification consists of a budget narrative and a line-item budget detail.
- Applicants should include the information on this slide and found in section IV.2 of the FOA.

Slide 24: Review and Selection

- 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.

Slide 25: Evaluation Criteria

- Applications competing for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated using the criteria described here and in Section V.1. 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.
- Please note: 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 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.
- The following evaluation criteria topics are included for this FOA:
 - Outcomes Expected worth 20 points, with two sub criterion: Goals and Objectives worth 10 points and Significance worth 10 points
 - Approach worth 40 points
 - Staff Qualifications worth 10 points
 - Organizational Capacity worth 10 points
 - Management Plan worth 10 points
 - Budget and Budget Justification worth 10 points

- In section V.1 of the FOA, there are specific review criterion under each of these categories that the reviewers will use to evaluate the applications. These are the only criterion reviewers will use to evaluate proposals. I have listed the evaluation criteria on the following slides for your reference, but will not read through these.

SLIDES 26-32: List of review criterion, please review on your own.

SLIDE 33: Reminders

- Applicants are responsible for ensuring that applications are submitted in advance of the application due date and time.
- Electronic submission is required unless an exemption is granted by ACF, as described earlier.
- All applicants must have a DUNS Number (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> and an active registration with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) on the System for Award Management (SAM.gov/SAM, www.sam.gov).
- If applicants encounter any technical difficulties in using www.Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Support Center at: 1- 800-518-4726, or by email at support@grants.gov, to report the problem and obtain assistance

SLIDE 34: Transcript

- A transcript of this teleconference will be posted to:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/child-care-development-block-grant-cbdbg-implementation-research-and-evaluation-planning-grants>

SLIDE 35

- I want to thank you all for attending this teleconference. As I said at the top of the call, I am unable to take any questions at this time, but I hope the information provided today was helpful in thinking about your applications. My contact information is listed on this slide. Although you are welcome to contact me, I cannot provide any answers or information that is not included in the FOA to applicants. If you have any questions about submitting your applications, please email the team at ICFI at CCDBG@icfi.com
- Good luck!