4184-01

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children and Families

Child Care Policy Research Discretionary Grants

[Program Announcement No. ACYF-PA-CCB-2001-04]

AGENCY: Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Administration for Children and Families, (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

ACTION: Announcement of the availability of funds and request for applications for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects, Child Care Research Scholars, and State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this program announcement is to announce the availability of $3.7 million in fiscal year 2001 funds for child care research, demonstration, and evaluation activities to be distributed through grants to fund projects in the following three priority areas: (1) Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects; (2) Child Care Research Scholars; and (3) State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects. Universities and colleges, public agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations agreeing to waive their fees are invited to submit applications for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects. Accredited universities and colleges may submit a Child Care Research Scholar application on behalf of a doctoral student conducting dissertation research on a child care policy topic. Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies seeking to improve their capacity for data analysis and policy-relevant research are invited to submit applications for the State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects.

Projects funded under each of the priority areas are expected to address critical questions with implications for children and families, especially low-income working families and families transitioning off welfare. In addition, projects will contribute to a comprehensive research agenda designed to increase the capacity for child care research at the national, State, and local levels and promote better linkages among research, policy, practice, and outcomes for children and families.

DATES: The closing date for submission of applications is [**June 28, 2001**] Mailed applications postmarked after the closing date will be classified as late.

MAILING AND DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS: Mailed applications shall be considered as meeting the announcement deadline if they are either received on or before the deadline date, or sent on or before the deadline date, and received by ACF in time for the independent review to:

>Administration on Children, Youth and Families
>Child Care Bureau
>Program Announcement No. ACYF-PA-CCB-2001-XX
>1815 North Fort Myer Drive
>Suite 300
>Arlington, VA 22209
>Telephone: 1-800-351-2293

Applicants must ensure that a legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark or a legibly dated, machine-produced postmark or a commercial mail service is affixed to the envelope/package containing the application(s). To be acceptable as proof of timely mailing, a postmark from a commercial mail service must include the logo/emblem of the commercial mail service company and must reflect the date the package was received by the commercial mail service company from the applicant. Private metered postmarks shall not be acceptable as proof of timely mailing.

Applications hand carried by applicants, applicant couriers, or by other representatives of the applicant shall be considered as meeting an announcement deadline if they are received on or before the deadline date, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 p.m., EST, Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays) at the address above. (Applicants are cautioned that express/overnight mail services do not always deliver as agreed.)

ACF cannot accommodate transmission of applications by fax or through other electronic media, regardless of date or time of submission and receipt. Therefore, applications transmitted to ACF electronically will not be accepted.

Late Applications. Applications, which do not meet the criteria stated above and are not received by the deadline date and time, are considered late applications. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will notify each late applicant that its application will not be considered in the current competition.

Extension of Deadline. ACF may extend an application deadline for applicants affected by acts of God such as floods and hurricanes, when there is widespread disruption of mail service, or for other disruption of services, such as prolonged blackout, that affect the public at large. A determination to waive or extend deadline requirements rests with the Chief Grants Management Officer.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT APPLICATION: If you intend to submit an application, please contact ACYF's Operations Center at 1-800-351-2293 with the following information: the number and title of this announcement; your organization's name and address; and your contact person's name, phone number, fax number, and Email address. The information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications and to update the mailing list for program announcements.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information about the application process contact ACYF Operations Center, 1815 North Fort Myer Drive, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22209, Phone: 1- 800-351-2293. For program information contact Dr. Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, Policy Fellow, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, Room 2046, Mary E. Switzer Building, 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20447, Phone: 202-690-7885, Fax: 202-690-5600, Email: imartinezbeck@acf.dhhs.gov, or Dr. Patricia L. Divine, Program Specialist, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, Room 2046, Mary E. Switzer Building, 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20447, Phone: 202-690-6705, Fax: 202-690-5600, Email: pdivine@acf.dhhs.gov .

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

This announcement includes the instructions needed to apply for (1) Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects; (2) Child Care Research Scholars; and (3) State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects. The Standard Federal Forms that must be included in applications can be downloaded from the Internet at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofs/. For each priority area, the required Standard Federal Forms are identified under "Project Description and Application Requirements."

The Supplementary Information section consists of six parts. Part I provides information about the Child Care Bureau, its research agenda and strategies, priority areas to be funded under this announcement, and instructions for submitting an application. Part II describes key research questions in the Child Care Bureau's broad research agenda. Part III provides background information, instructions for completing applications, evaluation criteria, and funding procedures for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects (Priority Area 1). Part IV provides background information, instructions for completing applications, evaluation criteria, and funding procedures for Child Care Research Scholars (Priority Area 2). Part V provides background information, instructions for completing applications, evaluation criteria, and funding procedures for the State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects (Priority Area 3). Part VI

Appendices includes Appendix 1, content and format of application, and Appendix 2, the OMB-approved Uniform Project Description. The contents are outlined below:

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PART I. GENERAL INFORMATION ([back to top](#))

A.   <u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of this program announcement is to fund child care research grants that will increase the capacity for child care research at national, State, and local levels while simultaneously answering critical questions with implications for children and families, particularly low-income working families and families transitioning off welfare.

B.   <u>Citations</u>

1. <u>Statutory authority:</u> The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 as amended (CCDBG Act); section 418 of the Social Security Act; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2001 (P. L. 106-554).

2. <u>Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance:</u> The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number for all priority areas is 93.647.

3. <u>Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995</u> (P. L. 104-13): Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 hours per response for the Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects, 15 hours per response for the Child Care Research Scholars, and 20 hours per response for the State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Building Projects. These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. The project description is approved under OMB control Number 0970-0139 which expires 12/31/03. 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.

C.   <u>Number of Awards, Duration, and Funding Levels</u>

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Approximately 17-21 grants, including all priority areas, will be awarded in Fiscal year 2001 (ending September 30, 2001), subject to results of the competitive review process and availability of funds. This announcement is soliciting applications for project periods up to three years. Awards, on a competitive basis, will be for a one-year budget period. Applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the one-year budget period but within the three year project period will be entertained in subsequent years on a non-competitive basis, subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the grantee and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Government. Should additional funds be available in FY 2002, ACF also reserves the right to fund additional projects from among the applications received through this announcement. Funding levels for the first budget period will be up to $30,000 for the Child Care Research Scholar grants, up to $250,000 for the Field Initiated Child Care Research projects, and up to $250,000 for the State Child Care Data and Research Capacity projects.

D.   The Child Care Bureau

The Child Care Bureau (CCB) was established in 1994 to provide leadership in efforts to enhance the quality, affordability, and supply of child care available for all families. The Child Care Bureau administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a $4.6 billion child care program that includes funding for child care subsidies and activities to improve the quality and availability of child care. CCDF was created after amendments to ACF child care programs by Title VI of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 consolidated four Federal child care funding streams including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, AFDC/JOBS Child Care, Transitional Child Care, and At-Risk Child Care.

The Bureau works closely with ACF Regions, States, Territories and Tribes to assist with, oversee, and document implementation of new policies and programs in support of State, local and private sector administration of child care services and systems. In addition, the Bureau collaborates extensively with other offices throughout the Federal government to promote integrated, family-focused services and coordinated child care delivery systems. In all of these activities, the Bureau seeks to enhance the quality, availability, and affordability of child care services, support children's healthy growth and development in safe child care environments, enhance parental choice and involvement in their children's care, and facilitate the linkage of child care with other community services.

E.   Context

Welfare reform and a strong economy have contributed to dramatic increases in the number of low-income mothers in the paid labor market. The percentage of single mothers with incomes under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level rose from 44 percent in 1992 to 57 percent in 1999 (U.S. Bureau of the Census). As increasing numbers of parents work and children experience non-parental care at younger and younger ages, questions about the availability, quality, and cost of child care and their effects on child and family outcomes take on a new urgency.

The projects to be funded under this announcement build on significant child care research already in progress with support from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and other funding agencies. Many child care research efforts already underway are providing important information on: the intersection of policies supporting welfare reform and child care, as well as descriptions of local child care populations, services, and outcomes; local profiles of child care supply and demand; and specific

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policy implementation related to State child care regulations, subsidy programs, and welfare reform. In 1995, the CCB initiated a series of cooperative agreements for Child Care Policy Research Partnerships. These Partnerships, composed of policy makers, practitioners, and researchers, are providing State and cross-State information on child care needs, utilization patterns and outcomes for low-income families. They have contributed information on the effects of State and local policies on (1) parents' choice of care; (2) the supply of care; (3) the duration of subsidy utilization and child care arrangements; and (4) the relationship between availability of subsidized care and entry into the job market. Twenty-two States have participated in these research collaborations.

A five year study funded by the Office for Planning, Research, and Evaluation in ACF is examining the broad patterns of Federal and State welfare and child care policies in States and communities. The study focuses on low-income parents and children in those communities, particularly those parents using family child care. The shifts in social policy affecting child care subsidies underscored the need to describe the landscape of child care services available to families, the choices they make, and the effect such choices have on children and families. Its first report, entitled "State and Community Sub-study Interim Report" focuses on the effects of welfare reform and other policies and programs on the child care market.

Concurrently, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) sponsored a report examining how early childhood programs and TANF agencies are working together to better meet the needs of families with young children, specifically those affected by welfare reform. ASPE and ACF are also supporting efforts in five States to improve the measurement of family and child health and well-being in State welfare evaluations. In addition, ASPE and ACF have funded a separate, complementary project in 13 states which supports the development and use of indicators for children's health and well-being in areas such as child care and school readiness.

During FY 2000, the CCB funded twelve new Field Initiated Child Care Research Grants, four additional Policy Research Partnerships, and five Research Scholars who are currently working on a wide variety of research projects in areas such as subsidy utilization, parental employment and choice of care, quality of care, care of infants and toddlers, cost of care, supply and demand of care, and child care workforce.

In addition, in FY 2000, CCB funded the development of the Child Care Research Collaboration and Archive to create an infrastructure for collaborative research and analysis and information sharing among researchers, policy makers, and other key stakeholders. It will serve as a repository of child care research and data through a web-based archive; develop and disseminate materials designed to improve child care policy research; and make research findings readily available to policy makers.

F.   Need for Child Care Research

Child care research and evaluation are critical to understanding child care and its implications for children and families. Under Federal legislation governing welfare and child care, States have the opportunity to craft programs suited to their citizens; however, they are also faced with the unprecedented challenges in meeting the needs of low-income, under-served, and other vulnerable populations. Public agencies are increasingly under pressure to use their child care dollars as effectively as possible and to demonstrate how their investments are making a difference in the lives of families with children. Yet, research and analysis of administrative data need to be expanded and updated in order to address additional policy and planning issues.

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G.   Research Agenda and Goals

The Child Care Bureau's FY 2001 child care research agenda will extend the child care research activities that began in FY 2000 and launch new evaluation and research capacity building initiatives. The activities supported through this announcement will provide information and data to guide child care services, inform policy debates, and assist in developing solutions to complex child care issues. We intend to improve our capacity to respond to questions of immediate concern to policy makers, strengthen the child care research infrastructure, and increase knowledge about the efficacy of child care policies and programs in providing positive outcomes for children and helping low-income families obtain and retain work.

H.   Priority Areas to be funded under this Announcement

Projects funded under each priority area will contribute to the Child Care Bureau's research goals, provide timely answers to critical questions, and expand research capacity. The three priority areas identified for this Announcement include:

1. *Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects* are being funded to stimulate research that will expand on the work started by projects funded during FY 2000 by examining the interrelationships within child care systems. While projects may involve analysis of national or State data sets, we expect that most of these studies will address issues relevant to local communities and groups. Since child care markets are local, there is a need to understand market dynamics, how child care demand and supply interact, how child care arrangements intersect with family, work, school, and other institutions in the community and how these factors relate to outcomes. Priority will be given to applicants proposing to address child care research questions that focus on the child care needs of special subgroups including families that include an infant, child with special needs, or school-age child, ethnic minority families, and families in which the primary caregiver works non-standard hours. Proposals dealing with other special subgroups and populations are also encouraged. In addition we encourage proposals designed to evaluate the effects of initiatives to improve child care services and systems.

2. *Child Care Research Scholar* grants will provide support for doctoral candidates in conducting dissertation research on child care. Issues of special priority for Child Care Research Scholarships include those listed for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects. Applicants should expect to complete their dissertation research within the two-year scholarship period.

3. *State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects* are being funded to provide support to Child Care and Development Fund State Lead Agencies in building internal or contractual research and evaluation capacity.   We expect that projects funded under this priority will focus on building a State-level infrastructure to: 1) improve data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of CCDF data; 2) develop or improve analytic linkages with other State and local data systems; 3) build collaborative efforts among institutions of higher education, research organizations, policy makers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to promote high quality research; 4) conduct child care research that is specifically responsive to the needs of the State and local communities within the State; 5) develop leadership skills in the management and interpretation of data; and, 6) exercise effective dissemination strategies and means of informing policy decisions with research results.

I.   Submission of Applications

Only one priority area may be included in each application. Applicants, depending on eligibility requirements for the specific priority area, may apply for more than one priority area with separate applications. However, applicants will be eligible for only one award in each priority area (with the possible exception noted in Part IV, B, Child Care Research Scholars). The cover letter for each application must state all the priority areas in which applications are being submitted.

Applicants should submit an original and two copies of the complete application packet. Each copy of the application should be securely stapled in the upper left-hand corner, clipped, or enclosed in a quick-release binder. Because each application will be duplicated for the review panel, do not use non-removable binders. Do not include tabs, plastic inserts, brochures, videos, or any other item that cannot be photocopied.

J.   Selection Process

The Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, will make the final selection of the applicants to be funded. Applications may be funded in whole or in part depending on: (1) the rank order of applicants resulting from the competitive review; (2) staff review and consultations; (3) the combination of projects which best meets the Bureau's research objectives; (4) the funds available; and (5) other relevant considerations.

Selected applicants will be notified through the issuance of a Financial Assistance Award which sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions, reporting requirements, the effective date of the award, the budget period for which support is given, and the total project period for which support is provided.

1.   Screening and Panel Review

Each application will be screened to determine whether the applicant organization is eligible as specified in each of the priority areas. Applications from ineligible organizations will be excluded from the review.

a.   The review will be conducted in Washington, D.C. Expert reviewers will include researchers, Federal or State staff, child care administrators and other individuals experienced in the study of child care demand and supply, child care delivery systems, welfare and supportive services, early child development and education, parental choice and involvement, and other relevant areas.

b.   A panel of at least three reviewers will evaluate each application to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal in terms of the Bureau's research goals and expectations for the priority area under consideration, requirements for the Project Narrative Statement, and the evaluation criteria listed below.

c.   Panelists will provide written comments and assign numerical scores for each application. The indicated point value for each criterion is the maximum numerical score for that criterion. The assigned scores for

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each criterion will be summed to yield a total evaluation score for the proposal.

        d.   In addition to the panel review, the Bureau may solicit comments from other Federal offices and agencies, from the states, from relevant non-governmental organizations, and from individuals whose particular expertise is identified as necessary for the consideration of technical issues arising during the review. Their comments, along with those of the panelists, will be considered by the Bureau in making funding decisions. The Bureau will also take into account the best combination of proposed projects to meet overall research goals.

   2.   Funding Date

Grants to successful applications will be awarded by September 30, 2001.

PART II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PRIORITIES ([back to top](#))

As a result of major social change, shifting cultural patterns, and new legislation, child care has changed dramatically over the past decade. It is now apparent that child care markets are local, but influenced by State and national policies and trends.   In addition, child care now touches many different aspects of contemporary life with implications for children, parents, educators, employers, communities, and society as a whole. Nonetheless, current knowledge in this area remains largely fragmented and piecemeal; there is little integration of information emerging from the various academic disciplines and child care sectors.

As more knowledge is gained about child development and well-being in contemporary environments, there is a need for better understanding of how child care affects the growing child. As more is known about the growing diversity in family values, child rearing strategies, preferences, and needs, questions arise as to how child care policies and programs affect the ability of parents to make wise decisions for their children. A better understanding of child care is also critical to employment goals for adults, particularly in the arena of welfare reform and economic self-reliance. In addition, there is a need for better information about how child care can help parents manage the difficulties of balancing work and family life, especially when resources are scarce.

This section describes five broad research questions that the Child Care Bureau's research agenda seeks to address. These questions are designed to provide descriptive profiles of child care supply and demand, examine major variations and their outcomes, explore the interrelationships among child care market forces, policies and programs, and determine how these factors play out among different populations of children and families.

- What does child care look like today?

- How do the variations in child care affect children?

- How do the variations in child care affect parents?

- How do the answers to these broad questions translate into specific policy and program choices at the state and local levels?

- How do the answers to all the questions above differ for sub-groups of children and families?

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These five questions and their sub-questions were developed from the comments and suggestions of researchers, policy makers, and practitioners during the development of the Child Care Bureau's research agenda. We are particularly interested in these questions as they relate to low-income families, including those who are transitioning from welfare to work, working families who were formerly on welfare, and working families who have not been a part of the welfare system. We are also concerned with the many issues of unmet need, quality of care, policy relevance, and outcomes as these themes play out in different social, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

Each question contains several illustrative sub-questions. No individual research project is expected to address all of these questions; a project may focus on a particular, essential issue or explore a more complex set. However, each project should contribute to the larger context of interrelated child care issues.

A.   What Does Child Care Look Like Today?

The first research question is intended to broadly describe child care today. What types of care do families use? What quality of care do children receive? What does child care cost and how much do parents pay? Who are the providers of child care and what are their characteristics? The answers to these descriptive questions will form the basis for more detailed exploration of interrelationships among child care market forces, social and cultural influences, policies, programs, and outcomes.

Types of Care

- How many families rely exclusively on their own members for the care of children at different ages? How many parents provide all of the care for their children? How may rely on other adult relatives including grandparents? How many allow children to care for themselves or their younger siblings? How many families rely largely on care in the community? How many use some combination of care within the family and the community? Are there common usage patterns or transitions between family and community care?

- How is the community supply of care distributed across different types of care: child care centers and other early childhood programs, group child care homes, family child care homes, and arrangements in the child's own home (nannies or sitters)?

- Within the formal child care sector, how is the supply of care distributed across regulated family child care homes and center-based programs? To what extent do family child care homes operate as part of networks? Within the informal care sector, how is the supply distributed among relatives (kin), individuals within close social networks (kith), legally operating non-regulated care offered in the community, and "underground" or illegally operating services?

Quality of Care

- What are the elements of quality in the care of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers? What constitutes quality in programs serving six-to-twelve year old children during their out-of-school time? How do child care professionals and informal providers define high-quality and low-quality care? How do parents define quality? What do school-age children have to say about their own needs and preferences in the use of out-of-school time? How do the same or similar dimensions of quality change when applied to children in different developmental stages?

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- What are the key indicators of high quality in different types of environments? Of low quality? How does structural quality (e.g., caregiver-to-child ratios, group size and professional qualifications) relate to process quality (what happens in the child care environment) and quality as measured by interviews with parents, providers or other professionals?

- What is the range of quality within a given type of care according to a variety of approaches and measures? What aspects of quality appear to be most prevalent or lacking in center-based settings and home-based environments? In formal care programs and informal arrangements?

- How do variables related to the distribution of child care relate to families and their experiences? For example, how many and what types of care do children experience throughout the day? How many arrangements do they have over the course of a year? How do elements of care stability, continuity, and transition affect the quality of their care in different types of settings?

Costs of Care and Subsidies

- What are the costs of care provided in different types of settings? What does care actually cost to provide? What do providers charge? How much do parents pay?

- To what extent are subsidies available and accessible to eligible families and children? To what extent are subsidies used? Which eligible families use subsidies and which do not? What do eligible families do when subsidies are not available?

- How do child care subsidies affect the price of care purchased by low-income parents? Do parents who receive child care subsidies make different choices than low-income parents without subsidies? What is the quality of care purchased by families with the help of subsidies?

- How does the utilization of subsidized child care shift during the transition from welfare-to-work? How does use of subsidies vary among current TANF recipients, former TANF recipients, and other working poor families? What are the interrelationships among welfare status, employment, child care subsidy, price of care, and family income?

- Do subsidies affect the likelihood of working, the number of hours worked, the types of jobs obtained, or the level of earnings? Do subsidies affect the stability and progression of employment and earnings?

- What are the interrelationships among child care cost, subsidy, and quality? Do subsidies affect the quality, safety, and stability of care that children receive?

Characteristics of the Child Care Workforce

- Who is caring for children? How do characteristics of the child care workforce vary by type of care, regulatory status, demographic characteristics of the population, type of neighborhood, and other important variables?

- What are the demographic characteristics, professional characteristics, and motivations of individuals who work in child care and early education programs? What is the current salary and benefit

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structure for child care center staff, preschool teachers and other early childhood professionals? How do provider education, training, and experience affect salaries and benefits?

- What factors make a difference in staff turnover, continuity of care, and the quality of services provided? What are the challenges to retention of qualified staff? How do quality enhancements such as accreditation affect the quality of services received? Do accredited programs maintain higher levels of quality over time?

- What are the demographic characteristics, background, training, skills, and motivations of licensed family child care providers, license-exempt caregivers, and other unregulated providers in the community? What types of supports are available and used by caregivers that are part of a formal system and those who operate informally?

B.   How do the major variations in child care affect children?

This set of questions examines how children develop in different care environments, how various features of child care affect children, and how child care relates to other important factors such as school readiness and achievement.

- What components of healthy development are most affected by child care? How do emotional, cognitive, and social variables interact in the developing child? How do early experiences in child care help to shape development? What are the implications of different aspects and levels of child care quality for growth and development throughout childhood?

- How do structural variables of quality (regulatory status, staff/child ratio, group size, caregiver training, etc) relate to caregiver behaviors and outcomes for children? For example, do informal caregivers provide safety, stability, continuity, and developmentally appropriate experiences?

- How do other features of child care environments, such as type of care, cost, administrative strategies, and characteristics of the child care workforce affect outcomes in children?

- What are the interrelationships among types of setting, quality of child care and school readiness? What are the linkages between child care, children's development, school readiness, and later school performance? How do programs serving older children during out-of-school time influence their academic performance and developmental well-being?

- How many children are in high-quality care environments that promote their healthy development? How many are in poor quality settings that threaten to impair their development? What are the most important factors?

- Are there important interrelationships between child care quality and the quality of children's other environments? For example, does the availability of high child care quality mitigate against violence in the home and community? Does a generally low level of quality in child care increase the risk? In what ways?

C.   How do the major variations in child care affect parents?

This set of questions examines the interrelationships among market forces, workplace factors, child care policies and programs, community supports, and outcomes for parents.

- What is the relationship between parents' perceptions of quality care, their goals around child literacy, and the child care decisions they make? Do they choose care that is consistent with their values and expectations?

- Do families with more choices receive better quality? Do those with fewer choices receive care of lower quality? What is the impact on parents when they can't find or afford high quality care for their children?

- What do parents know about the availability of child care options, subsidies and other resources in their community? Are there groups of parents who are better informed than others? How do resource and referral services or other community supports influence the choices and quality of care experienced by families. How does information influence decision-making?

- Is there an unmet need for subsidies? Which factors appear to influence subsidy use when subsidies are available? What happens to eligible families when child care subsidies are not available? What are the cultural, social, economic and institutional constraints on the demand for child care subsidies?

- To what extent do child care problems and instability affect workplace productivity, absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover? How are employers dealing with these problems? To what extent do employers provide assistance for child care through on- or near-site programs, dependent care plans, purchase of slots?

- To what extent do workplace policies and personnel practices affect parents' ability to successfully work and care for their children? How do parents deal with tensions and conflict between child care and work demands?

- How do variations in type of care, quality, cost, use of subsidy, characteristics of the child care workforce, and other important features affect the ability of families to meet basic needs? What are the effects on employment, earnings, family income and career progression?

- How do policies and practices concerning flexibility of child care interact with workplace policies concerning flexibility for workers and flexibility within the family? How do particular patterns of flexibility and rigidity enhance or limit the ability of parents to successfully manage family and work responsibilities? Where do parents find the flexibility they need?

- How affordable is child care for low-income parents? What proportion of family income goes for child care in various types of families?

- What trade-offs do parents make among child care cost, quality and flexibility or convenience? How do they make these decisions? What are the most important elements in formulating complex choices?

D.   How do the answers to these broad questions translate into specific policy and program choices at State and local levels?

This set of questions explores interrelationships among market forces, policies, and programs carried out by states and local communities, along with the outcomes of these factors for children and families.

- How effective are State and community efforts to improve the quality and availability of child care? How do child care subsidy policies affect the availability and quality of care? For example, how do eligibility requirements, co-payment requirements and reimbursement rates interact to affect supply of care in local markets? Are market rate surveys useful in assessing the cost of care and the appropriate levels of reimbursement? To what extent do market rate surveys reward the more affluent urban providers while penalizing providers in poorer counties? Do differences in how subsidies and licensing are administered influence child care supply and demand and the use of subsidies?

- How are the roles of local stakeholders (advocates, providers, parents, schools, businesses, etc.) in child care changing? How do changing roles and relationships affect the overall child care system?

- What roles do resource and referral programs play? Does the presence of resource and referral services influence the supply of care? In areas where no such program is available, how do providers and parents learn about resources such as training, subsidies, and the community supply of care?

- What roles do employers play? To what extent and in what ways do employers subsidize child care for their employees? To what extent to they participate in the community infrastructure for support of the child care industry through resource and referral, training or technical assistance for providers, parent education and consumer information, or transportation for children?

- How do child care regulations, subsidies and other policies affect the availability of care in low-income neighborhoods? What is the relationship between the overall supply of care in a community and the care used by subsidized families?

- What are the interrelationships among local market rates, child care subsidies, and what parents pay? How do child care subsidies and co-payment rates affect the cost of care in local markets? How do required co-payments and additional fees charged by providers affect subsidy utilization and choices made by parents?

- What are the interrelationships among parents' judgments, providers' judgments, professional observations of care environments, and children's experiences? Are there innovative methods that States and communities can use to identify need, improve responsiveness to families, leverage resources, and improve the quality of services?

- Within the specific types of care, what aspects need improvement? How can States assess and improve the quality of care within each type?

- How do public and private child care programs, Head Start, kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs, before-and after-school programs, and other child development programs fit into the community-level infrastructure? To what extent do community child care centers, Head Start programs, State pre-kindergarten programs and other early childhood programs collaborate? What are the challenges to collaboration? Are there successful models of statewide or local collaboration? Are there specific policies that make a difference?

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- How do States and localities fund child care and other early childhood education programs? What innovations are being explored? What are the funding barriers to a seamless system? How are funds being blended at the State and local levels? How do various financing strategies affect the availability and access to high quality care in different communities?

- How do State and local regulations affect quality in various child care settings? How is this process mediated by institutional and community factors? How have States used their quality improvement funds? What are the results of these initiatives? Have they made a difference for children and families?

- How do State and local policy variations affect the utilization of subsidized care? Why don't some eligible families apply for subsidies? What happens to eligible families who apply for but do not receive subsidized care?

- How do child care policies affect welfare families, those moving off welfare, and the working poor who are not part of the welfare system? How are working class and middle-income families affected by child care policies?

E.   How do the answers to all the questions above differ for sub-groups of children and families?

This set of questions examines how different groups of children and families are being affected by the major variations in child care market structures, policies and programs in the light of social and cultural trends. Questions that relate to subgroups of children and families are a priority for the Child Care Bureau in this procurement.

Family Structure and Characteristics of Children

- What are the variations in services and outcomes when viewed through the lens of family structure and child characteristics?

- Do different types of providers serve different child populations? What services are available and utilized for the care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, young school-age children and those in the upper elementary grades? For children with disabilities or chronic illness? Abused and neglected children?

- Do single parents, two parent families and extended families make different arrangements for the care of their children?

Demographic and Cultural Factors

- What demographic, cultural and linguistic factors influence the availability, utilization, cost, and quality of care? How are population demographics changing in local communities, and how does increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity affect child care services?

- How do demographic, cultural and linguistic factors affect parental selection and utilization patterns? What are the determinants of parental choice in different cultural and ethnic groups? What family- and community-level factors shape the type and quality of care selected by low-income parents in different cultural and linguistic contexts?

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- Do parents with different personal characteristics, family structures, financial resources, and employment patterns make different child care choices? Do some families have more or better options? Are some families able to make better use of their perceived options? How do geographic, community or cultural factors affect parent's decisions, utilization patterns and outcomes?

- What is the availability, accessibility, cost and quality of care for children from various ethnic groups, especially Native American children, recent immigrants, and non-English speaking children? Are there shortages of care for children in some age groups, ethnic groups, or special circumstances? What are the outcomes for these different groups of children?

Community and Neighborhood Factors

- What are the major variations when viewed through the lens of community and neighborhood? How does the availability of care vary in different types of communities and neighborhoods? Is the distribution of care different in neighborhoods with large welfare populations, neighborhoods with large numbers of low-income working families, and more affluent neighborhoods?

- What community factors are important? How do child care market forces, policies, programs and outcomes vary in different kinds of communities, including rural and remote rural areas, inner cities, small towns, and economically distressed neighborhoods?

Policy Variations in the Social and Cultural Context

- How do State and local child care policies and programs affect the choices parents make and are able to sustain?

- How do state and local policies affect child care availability, accessibility, affordability, utilization and outcomes for current TANF recipients, former TANF recipients, low-income families who are not part of the welfare system?

- How do policies and programs affect teen parents, recent immigrants, families who work non-standard hours, single parents, parents with significant health problems and others for whom child care can make a critical difference?

- What are the outcomes for different groups of parents in terms of education, employment, wage progression and job stability? What are their outcomes in terms of family variables?

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PART III. PRIORITY AREA 1: FIELD INITIATED CHILD CARE RESEARCH PROJECTS ()

Following are the description and requirements for projects funded under Priority Area 1. Instructions for completing applications are included, as are evaluation criteria and funding procedures.

A.   Purpose

The purpose of this priority area is to stimulate child care research that helps States, communities and the Child Care Bureau respond to emerging issues and questions in a timely and direct manner. Projects funded under this priority area must contribute significantly to the overall research agenda, help build the research infrastructure, and lay the foundation for informed policy and practices. Grantees are expected to produce preliminary findings by the end of the first budget period.

B.   Priorities

As specified in Parts I and II, Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects are expected to address issues relevant to local communities and groups. Since child care markets are local, there is a need to understand market dynamics, how child care demand and supply interact, how child care arrangements intersect with family, work, school, and other institutions in the community and how these factors relate to outcomes, and the effects of State and community initiatives on the quality and availability of care. The following are issues of special priority for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects: (1) child care needs of special subgroups, including families that include an infant, a child with special needs, and/or a school-age child, ethnic minority families, and families in which the primary caregiver works non-standard hours; and (2) proposals designed to evaluate the effects of initiatives to improve child care services and systems. Applications dealing with other important issues are also invited.

Projects in this priority may be stand-alone studies or may link with other studies to add sites, expand samples, add study components, add populations, or conduct special analyses. In addition, these projects may involve secondary analyses of completed data sets, including those from State or national studies when appropriate. Partnerships are not required for projects in this category but are encouraged if the resulting research will be more significant or complete than could be accomplished by a single organization. Projects are also encouraged to take advantage of "natural experiments" to better understand how changes in State and local child care policy (such as devolution or responsibility for subsidy programs to local offices) may be affecting child care patterns and outcomes in different policy contexts.

C.   Number of Awards

Approximately 7-10 grants will be awarded during fiscal Year 2001, for an initial budget period of twelve months, subject to the availability of funds and results of the evaluation process.

D.   Project Duration, Funding Levels and Budget Periods

This priority area is soliciting applications for project periods up to three years. Awards, on a competitive basis, will be for a one-year budget period, although project periods may be for three years. Applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the one-year budget period, but within the three year project period, will be entertained in subsequent years on a non-competitive basis, subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the grantee, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the government.

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Significant findings by the end of the first budget period will be necessary to demonstrate satisfactory progress on the part of the grantee. The project period for three-year grants will be September 30, 2001-September 29, 2004.

Funding for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects will range between $150,000 and $250,000 for the first budget period and up to $200,000 per year (12 months) in subsequent periods.

E.   Federal Share

To maximize the Federal investment in Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects and in the interest of project sustainability, a financial commitment by the applicant organization (or other participating entities) is required. The Grantee must provide at least 20 percent of the total approved cost of the project. The total approved cost is the sum of the Federal share and the non-Federal share. Therefore, a project requesting $250,000 for the first budget period must include a match of at least $62,500. A project receiving the maximum total of $650,000 for the three-year project period must include a match of at least $162,500 for the three-year project period. Applicants are encouraged to meet their match requirements through cash contributions. However, the non-Federal share may also be in-kind contributions of staff time, employee benefits, facilities, utilities, equipment, materials, supplies or other forms of project support. Grantees will be held accountable for the commitment of non-Federal resources and failure to provide the required amount will result in disallowance of unmatched Federal funds.

F.   Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include public agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit entities that agree to waive their fees.

1. Public agencies include state or local child care agencies; education agencies, welfare or other human services agencies, public schools, colleges and universities; and other public agencies with an interest in child care.

2. Non-profit agencies include, but are not limited to, community child care and early childhood programs, child care resource and referral programs, professional organizations, schools, colleges and universities, civic and community groups, and foundations.

3. For-profit entities include, but are not limited to, child care businesses,   private research corporations, and other profit-making organizations. These entities are only eligible to receive a grant directly if they agree to waive their fees. However, they may participate in projects as subcontractors, sub-grantees, or consultants without such a waiver.

G.   Data Ownership

Raw data are the property of the agency or organization where the data reside (for instance, the State agency or resource and referral entity.) Working data files constructed for research belong to the grantee carrying-out the research, but results from analyses of those data cannot be released without the approval of the agency that owns the original data. Once a study has been completed and released, clean, documented public use files must be prepared and archived according to specification supplied by the Child Care Bureau. These public-use data files will be the property of the Federal government and will remain in the public domain for secondary analysis by other researchers.

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H.   Project Description and Application Requirements

1. Contents and Format of the Application.

Clarity and conciseness are of utmost importance. ACYF strongly encourages applicants to limit their applications to 100 pages, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins and 12 point fonts. The total page limitation applies to both narrative text and supporting materials.

Applicants are cautioned to include all required forms and materials, organized according to the required format. (The description of the contents of the application materials listed below is included in Appendix 1 of this announcement.) The application packet must include the following items in order:

- a. Cover Letter
- b. Standard Federal Forms
    - Standard Application for Federal Assistance (forms 424 and 424A)
    - Assurances: Non-construction Programs (form 424B)
    - Certifications Regarding Lobbying
    - Disclosures of Lobbying Activities
    - Certification regarding Drug-free Workplace Requirements
    - Certification regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters
    - Protection of Human Subjects
    - Certification regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke
- c. Table of Contents
- d. Project Abstract
- e. Project Narrative Statement
- f. Appendices
    - Contact Information for all Key Staff
    - Resumes
    - Letters of Support, if appropriate
    - Other

2. Project Narrative Statement.

The project narrative statement contains most of the information on which applications will be competitively reviewed. The Project Narrative should be carefully developed in accordance with the research goals and expectations described for the priority area in which the applicant is submitting a proposal, the requirements listed below and described in the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2 in this announcement), and the evaluation criteria and selection factors described in section "I" below.

The following sections from the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2) should be included in the Project Narrative Statement of applications for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects:

- a. Objectives and Need for Assistance
- b. Approach
    - Research Design and Methodology
    - Management Plan
- c. Additional Information

<pre>
                    Staff and Position Data
                    Organizational Profiles
                    Third Party Agreements
                    Letters of Support
          d.   Budget and Budget Justification
</pre>

I.   <u>Evaluation Criteria</u>

The Project Narrative Statement contains most of the information on which applications will be competitively reviewed. The Project Narrative should be carefully developed in accordance with the research goals and expectations described for the priority area in which the applicant is submitting a proposal, the requirements described in this section, and the evaluation criteria and selection factors described below.

Eligible applications will be scored competitively against the published evaluation criteria described below. These criteria will be used in conjunction with other expectations, priorities and requirements set forth throughout this announcement to evaluate how well each proposal addresses the goals and priorities for funding.

CRITERION 1: OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE (maximum of 20 points)

In this section, applicants demonstrate their understanding of the relevant literature on critical issues and existing knowledge, describe their objectives, and demonstrate the significance of their proposal.

Applicants are expected to show how their proposal will address the Child Care Bureau's research agenda and priorities, answer key questions, and contribute to the child care research infrastructure. Specifically, applicants are expected to demonstrate a command of the policy and research literature in child care, as well as emerging issues. The proposal is expected to demonstrate understanding of current policies and programs, to show how the proposed research would further understanding, and to suggest practical applications which might be derived from the findings.

Applications should clearly show how the research would build on the current knowledge base and contribute to policy, practice, and future research. Applicants are asked to consider the significance, reliability, and validity of existing data pertaining to key questions. In addition, applicants should identify important gaps in the literature and areas in which findings are contradictory or ambiguous. It will also be important to consider what demographic, economic, and social data are available as a context for the proposed child care research. A bibliography of relevant literature must be supplied.

<u>Specific Review Criteria</u>

- The extent to which the application reflects a solid understanding of critical issues, information needs, and research goals as well as the Child Care Bureau's research priorities.

- The extent to which the proposed project framework is appropriate, feasible, and would significantly contribute to the importance, comprehensiveness, and quality of the proposed research.

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- The effectiveness with which the discussion articulates the current state of knowledge relative to issues being addressed, including: (1) critical child care issues and the complex interrelationships among major variables; (2) the significance of these issues and variables for child care policies and programs; (3) how current knowledge would be brought to bear on the proposed research; and (4) how the research would benefit various audiences.

- The importance of research priorities identified for the first budget period, the degree to which early findings would be useful for policy and practice, and the significance of these data for the ongoing research goals if the project is continued beyond the first 12-month period.

CRITERION 2: APPROACH (Research Design and Methodology) (maximum of 30 points)

This section of the Project Narrative Statement requires that the applicant describe the technical approach for addressing issues and achieving objectives described in Criterion 1 above. In this section the applicant should clearly demonstrate their ability to produce significant and usable results within the first 12-month budget period.

The methodological discussion must include technical details of the proposed research design, including (as relevant): (1) conceptual framework for the research; (2) research questions, hypotheses, and variables; (3) data sources and sampling plan; (4) new data on human subjects; (5) administrative data; (6) secondary analysis of existing data sets; (7) linkages with other research; (8) data collection; (9) data processing and statistical analysis; and, (10) product development and information dissemination. Qualitative studies with well-defined methodology are invited as well as those that use quantitative methodology. As part of the design section, applicants should discuss the strengths and limitations of all proposed approaches and techniques. Applicants are also asked to provide a flow chart or table showing interrelationships among the proposed research issues, questions, variables, and data elements.

Specific Review Criteria

The extent to which the applicant's proposed Research Design:

- Appropriately links critical research issues, questions, variables, data sources, samples, and analyses;

- Employs technically sound and appropriate approaches, design elements and procedures;

- Reflects sensitivity to technical, logistical, cultural and ethical issues that may arise;

- Includes realistic strategies for the resolution of difficulties;

- Adequately protects human subjects, confidentiality of data, and consent procedures, as appropriate;

- Includes an effective plan for the dissemination and utilization of information by researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners in the field; and

- Effectively utilizes collaborative strategies, as appropriate to the project goals and design.

Additional Information

1. Conceptual Framework for the Research

   Based on the issues and objectives described in Criterion 1, present the conceptual framework for the proposed research, including the approach to be taken and why this approach was chosen.

2. Research Questions, Hypotheses and Variables

   Based on the conceptual framework for the research, present: (1) areas of inquiry to be explored; (2) specific research questions and hypotheses; and (3) research variables and constructs. This discussion should relate back to the earlier discussion of Objectives and Need (I, 2, a) and lead into the design elements that follow.

3. Data Sources and Sampling Plan

   This section should include a detailed plan for identifying data sources and obtaining an appropriate sample to achieve objectives of the proposed research.

4. New Data on Human Subjects

   If new data are to be collected on human subjects, either independently or in conjunction with another ongoing study (e.g., by adding a new sample or an additional measure), describe the characteristics of the target population and provide a rationale for any sample stratification based on personal characteristics of individuals (such as ethnicity, income, marital status, or age of child.)

5. Administrative Data

   If data would be compiled from service delivery records of State or local agencies, from resource and referral files, from records maintained by child care facilities, or from other primary data sources, describe the nature of the data and how they would be accessed, characteristics of the sample and how it would be constructed, and how confidentiality of individual records would be maintained.

6. Secondary Analysis of Existing Data Sets

   If secondary analyses would be conducted on completed data sets, describe the original research, its appropriateness and limitations for this study. Describe the nature, scope and representativeness of the original sample and characteristics of the data (including data quality). Applicants who propose to conduct secondary analyses on large data sets, such as those from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other statistical organizations are expected to discuss how their analyses could be used to help profile national, regional or state-level child care market parameters and trends. If data sets from completed child care studies are to be analyzed, applicants are asked to suggest ways in which such data could be used by others to amplify or extend the proposed research.

7. Linkages With Other Research

If the proposed project would involve linkage with ongoing research, describe the ongoing research design and status, how the proposed study would benefit from and contribute to it, how the technical aspects of the linkage would be structured and carried out, and how the linked studies would address the goals of this announcement. Describe how the proposed research will make a distinct contribution while building on ongoing research. Include a letter of cooperation from the individual/organization conducting the research which details the status of the data collection, procedures to ensure data quality, timeliness of data availability and applicant access.

8. Data Collection

Describe data collection procedures and safeguards for data quality. Discuss procedures to protect human subjects, to maintain confidentiality of data, and to obtain consent for participation (if applicable).

9. Data Processing and Statistical Analysis

Include a detailed plan for processing and analyzing data from all sources which illustrates how the analyses will meet the goals of this research. Discuss the procedures which would be used to clean data, ensure data quality, and prepare data tapes. Discuss plans for the analysis of data, including units of analysis, analytic techniques to be used with various types of data, statistical considerations including, but not limited to power analysis, attrition, response rates, etc., and the linkage of data sets, where appropriate. Describe documentation of the final data set and preparation of data for archiving by the Child Care Bureau.

10. Product Development and Information Dissemination

Include a product development schedule and information dissemination plan which describes the products to be generated during the course of this research (such as technical papers or reports, summaries, briefings, conference presentations, doctoral dissertations, journal articles, internet applications, software and public use data tapes, and the final report). Describe the audiences for various products and the dissemination strategies that will be employed. Discuss which products might be collaboratively developed or disseminated to intended audiences.

CRITERION 3: APPROACH (Management Plan) (maximum of 10 points)

The Management Plan is expected to describe a sound and workable plan of action for how the proposed project will be carried out. This section should detail how the project will be structured and managed.

Applicants should provide a diagram showing the organizational structure of the project and the functional relationships among components. If the project is a collaborative, describe how the project will be managed by the lead organization to ensure that members of the collaborative operate as a cohesive research team and that cross-cutting goals of the project are carried out efficiently and cost-effectively. Describe the make-up and role of any steering or management committees, technical work groups, advisory panels, and other coordinating bodies.

Produce a project management chart that lays out monthly the sequence and timing of the major tasks and subtasks, including startup activities such as staffing and procurement of services, responsibilities and time commitments of staff, important milestones, reports, and completion dates. Explain how timeliness of activities will be ensured, how quality control will be maintained, and how costs will be controlled.

Applicants should discuss their management of the project as a whole, and the management and coordinating roles of any collaborating entities. Discuss potential problems or difficulties with the proposed management approach, including factors which may affect the quality of the research or its outcomes, may undermine the ability of different entities to collaborate effectively, and may hinder the early sharing, review and dissemination of information.

<u>Specific Review Criteria</u>

The extent to which the Management Plan:

- Presents a sound, workable and cohesive plan of action demonstrating how the work would be carried out on time, within budget and with a high degree of quality;

- Includes a reasonable schedule of target dates and accomplishments;

- Presents a sound administrative framework for maintaining quality control over the implementation and ongoing operations of the study;

- Presents a sound plan for coordination of activities carried out by partners and demonstrates an effective approach to team-building among project staff, consultants and advisors, and partnering organizations; and

- Demonstrates the ability to gain access to necessary organizations, subjects, and data.

CRITERION 4: STAFF AND POSITION DATA (maximum of 20 points)

In this section, applicants must provide evidence that project staff have the experience, expertise and commitment of sufficient time to carry out the proposed project on time, within budget, and with a high degree of quality.

Identify all key staff positions for this project, the professional requirements for each, the proportion of time staff holding these positions will be committed to the project, the period of time they will be employed, and whether their continued employment will be dependent solely on the funds to be awarded under this announcement.

Include a position description for each key position, outlining the qualifications necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities of each. Include letters of commitment from any key individuals who have been selected but not yet hired. Describe the makeup of the data collection team, what expertise will be represented, and how individuals will be selected. Identify all proposed consultants or advisors, document their expertise, and describe how their services will be utilized. Include letters of commitment or intent if

possible. And, identify the authors of the proposal and describe their continuing role in the project, if funded.

Specific Review Criteria

- The extent to which key staff, consultants, data collectors and other necessary personnel demonstrate competence in areas addressed by the proposed research, including relevant background, experience, training and work on related research or similar projects.

- The extent to which staffing is adequate for research design, sampling, field work, data processing, statistical analysis, reporting, collaboration with other researchers, and information dissemination.

- Provide evidence that individuals proposed for key positions have the necessary technical skill and experience to successfully carry out their assigned roles.

CRITERION 5: ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES (maximum of 10 points)

In this section, the applicant must demonstrate that the official grantee has the organizational capacity and fiscal resources to successfully carry-out the project on time and to a high standard of quality, including the capacity to resolve a wide variety of technical and management problems that may occur.

Provide evidence of sufficient organizational resources to ensure successful project management, compliance with terms and conditions of the grant, and oversight of the proper use of Federal funds.

If the project is a collaborative, provide evidence that all collaborators have the ability, willingness and flexibility to collaborate effectively with one another in carrying out the proposed project. Include examples of past or current collaborations that demonstrate the ability to carry out collaborative research. Describe how each entity was included in the planning of the project. Include letters of specific commitment or support from each entity. Describe all cooperative agreements, subcontracts and other formal relationships within the collaborative. Entities who will provide access to data or records must provide a letter stipulating the terms of their agreement with the researchers. Describe the future commitment each entity will make to ensure success of the collaboration as it evolves. Include a separate two-page organizational capability statement for each participating entity that documents the entity's ability to carry out its assigned roles and functions.

Describe the relationship between this project and other relevant work planned, anticipated or underway by the applicant or its collaborators. Include funding sources for work in progress. Provide a list of research and financial partners including the name and address of each organization, the names of its director and primary contact for this proposal, and the telephone, fax and internet numbers of each.

- The extent to which the applicant's facilities and organizational experience are (1) adequate to carry out the tasks of the proposed project; (2) the applicant can effectively and efficiently administer a project of the proposed size, complexity and scope; (3) the applicant has the capacity to coordinate activities with other organizations for the successful accomplishment of project objectives; and (4) the applicant has the capacity to carry out all proposed functions and roles.

- If the project is a collaborative with other entities, the extent to which; (1) the collaborative is well structured, with important and relevant roles for participating organizations; (2) collaborating entities are appropriate and significantly committed to research goals; (3) all have the ability to carry out collaborative research; (4) the collaborators will contribute adequate organizational resources; and (5) the collaborative has significant fiscal commitment and support.

CRITERION 6: BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (maximum of 10 points)

Describe the nature and extent of financial participation from all sources during the proposed project period. Present a detailed budget for each 12-month interval of the proposed project period, i.e., the 12 month budget period to be funded under this announcement and subsequent budget periods that may be funded under a non-competing continuation process. Include a detailed budget narrative that describes and justifies line item expenses within the object class categories listed on the Standard Form 424A. (Line item allocations and justification are required for both Federal and non-Federal funds.) If project funds will be subcontracted, a detailed budget for the use of those funds must be also included. In estimating costs, applicant should consider down time due to staff vacancies, administrative processes, etc. The budget should include funds to allow key representatives from Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects to participate in the Child Care Bureau Annual Policy Research Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Describe the extent to which funds, staff time, in-kind services, and other resources have been committed to the research effort during the planning period. Describe what other resources are expected to help support the proposed research, including existing commitments and negotiations in progress. Describe anticipated efforts to obtain other funding partners throughout the project.

Specific Review Criteria

- The extent to which proposed project costs are reasonable, the funds are appropriately allocated across component areas, and the budget is sufficient to accomplish the objectives.

- The extent to which the applicant has sufficient fiscal capacity within the organization to ensure that unanticipated problems can be resolved and that the project will be completed on time and with a high degree of quality.

- The extent to which the applicant will contribute to the project cost.

PART IV.   PRIORITY AREA 2: CHILD CARE RESEARCH SCHOLARS (back to top)

A.   Purpose

This priority is intended to strengthen the child care research infrastructure by supporting the development of researchers with a grasp of child care research and its implications for policies and programs. Under this priority area, support will be provided to doctoral candidates in conducting dissertation research on child care issues under the auspices of the Child Care Bureau and the educational institution in which the student is enrolled. Dissertation research under this priority must support the Bureau's research agenda including addressing important questions about child care that have implications to families and children.   The student is expected to gain experience and expertise in theories and methods related to child care, child development, early childhood education, child care program administration, or child care policy.

B.   Number of Awards

Up to 5 scholarships will be awarded. No individual educational institution will be funded for more than one candidate unless applications from different universities or colleges do not qualify for support.

C.   Project Period

The project period will be for a period of up to 24 months (9/30-01-9/29/03). For 24 month projects, the first 12 months will be funded through this competition. The subsequent year awards (12 months) will be considered on a non-competitive basis subject to the availability of funds from future appropriations, satisfactory progress of the grantee, and a determination that continued funding is in the best interest of the government. Significant findings by the end of the first budget period will be necessary to demonstrate satisfactory progress on the part of the grantee. A subsequent year award will not be approved if the student has graduated by the end of the first year.

D.   Funding Levels

Up to $30,000 will be awarded to each successful applicant for a 12-month budget period. If the applicant expects to receive a doctorate by the end of the first one-year budget period, the application should request funding for a single grant period.

E.   Matching Requirements and Non-Federal Share

There are no matching requirements.

F.   Maximum Federal Share

The maximum federal share is $30,000 for the first 12-month budget period and $20,000 for one subsequent 12-month period.

All monies must be used for the dissertation research including required personnel costs, travel, and other expenses directly related to the research.

G. Eligible Applicants

1. Eligible applicants include universities or colleges on behalf of doctoral candidates conducting dissertation research on a child care topic consistent with the research goals and priorities described in Parts I and II of this announcement, and who anticipate completing the child care-related dissertation within the two-year scholarship period.

2. To be eligible to administer the grant on behalf of the student, the institution must be fully accredited by one of the regional accrediting commissions recognized by the Department of Education. Although the faculty advisor will be listed as the Principal Investigator, this grant is intended for dissertation work being conducted by a doctoral candidate. Information about both the graduate student and the student's faculty advisor is required as part of this application. Any resultant grant award is not transferable to another student.

H. Additional Requirements

1. Research projects may include independent studies conducted by the doctoral candidate or well-defined portions of a larger study being conducted by a principal investigator holding a faculty position or senior research position and for which the graduate student will have primary responsibility.

2. The student must be the author of the proposal.

3. Research projects must use sound quantitative or qualitative research methodologies or some combination of the two.

4. Given the size of these grants, sponsoring universities and colleges are encouraged to waive their customary indirect charges.

5. Each grant award is intended to support the dissertation work of a specific student (the applicant) and is not transferable to another student.

I. Project Description and Application Requirements

1. Content and Format of Application.

Clarity and conciseness are of utmost importance. ACYF strongly encourages applicants to limit their applications to 100 pages, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins and 12 point fonts. The total page limitation applies to both narrative text and supporting materials.

Applicants are cautioned to include all required forms and materials, organized according to the required format. (The description of the contents of the application materials listed below is included in Appendix 1 of this announcement.) The application packet must include the following items in order:

a. Cover Letter
b. Standard Federal Forms
    Standard Application for Federal Assistance (forms 424 and 424A)
    Assurances: Non-construction Programs (form 424B)
    Certifications regarding Lobbying
    Disclosures of Lobbying Activities
    Certification regarding Drug-free Workplace Requirements
    Certification regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other   Responsibility Matters
    Protection of Human Subjects
    Certification regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke
c. Table of Contents
d. Project Abstract
e. Project Narrative Statement
f. Appendices
    Contact Information for Student and Faculty Advisor
    Curriculum Vitae for Student and Faculty Advisor
    Letters of Support from Advisor
    Official Transcript of Student Reflecting Courses Completed at the Masters and Ph.D. Levels

2. Project Narrative Statement.

The project narrative statement contains most of the information on which applications will be competitively reviewed. The Project Narrative should be carefully developed in accordance with the research goals and expectations described for the priority area in which the applicant is submitting a proposal, the requirements listed below and described in the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2 in this announcement), and the evaluation criteria described in section "J" below.

The following sections from the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2) should be included in the Project Narrative Statement of applications for Child Care Research Scholars:

a. Objectives and Need for Assistance
b. Approach
    Research Design and Methodology
    Management Plan
c. Additional Information
    Organizational Profile
d. Budget and Budget Justification

J.   <u>Evaluation Criteria</u>

Eligible applications will be scored competitively against the published evaluation criteria described below. These criteria will be used in conjunction with the other expectations, priorities and requirements set forth in this Announcement to evaluate how well each proposal addresses the Bureau's research agenda and goals.

CRITERION 1: OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE (maximum of 20 points)

- The extent to which the application reflects a solid understanding of critical issues, information needs, and research goals.

- The extent to which the conceptual model, research issues, objectives and hypotheses are significant, well formulated and appropriately linked, reflect the Child Care Bureau's research agenda and priorities, and will contribute new knowledge and understanding.

- The extent to which the proposed project framework is appropriate, feasible, and would significantly contribute to the importance, comprehensiveness, and quality of the proposed research.

- The effectiveness with which the proposal articulates the current state of knowledge relative to issues being addressed, including: critical child care issues and the complex interrelationships among major variables; the significance of these issues and variables for child care policies and programs; how current knowledge would be brought to bear on the proposed research; and how the research would benefit various audiences.

- The importance of research priorities identified for the first budget period, the degree to which early findings would be useful for policy and practice, and the significance of these data for the ongoing research goals if the project is continued beyond the first 12-month period.

CRITERION 2: APPROACH (Research Design and Methodology) (maximum of 40 points).

The extent to which the applicant's proposed research design:

- Appropriately links critical research issues, questions, variables, data   sources, samples, and analyses;

- Employs technically sound and appropriate approaches, design elements and procedures;

- Reflects sensitivity to technical, logistical, cultural and ethical issues that may arise;

- Includes realistic strategies for the resolution of difficulties;

- Adequately protects human subjects, confidentiality of data, and consent procedures, as appropriate;

- Includes an effective plan for the dissemination and utilization of information by researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners in the field; and,

- Effectively utilizes collaborative strategies, as appropriate to the project goals and design.

CRITERION 3: APPROACH (Management Plan) (maximum of 20 points).

The extent to which the project summary provides a management plan that:

- Presents a sound, workable and cohesive plan of action demonstrating how the work would be carried out on time, within budget and with a high degree of quality;

- Includes a reasonable schedule of target dates and accomplishments;

- Presents a sound administrative framework for maintaining quality control over the implementation and ongoing operations of the study; and,

- Demonstrates the ability to gain access to necessary organizations, subjects, and data.

CRITERION 4: ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES (Applicant Qualifications and Commitment) (maximum of 10 points).

The extent to which the applicant:

- Demonstrates competence in areas addressed by the proposed research, including relevant background, experience, training and work on related research or similar projects; and

- Demonstrates necessary expertise in research design, sampling, field work, data processing, statistical analysis, reporting, and information dissemination.

CRITERION 5: BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (maximum of 10 points).

The extent to which proposed project costs are reasonable, the funds are appropriately allocated across component areas, and the budget is sufficient to accomplish the objectives. The budget should include funds to allow the research scholar to participate in the Child Care Bureau Annual Policy Research Meeting in Washington, D.C.

PART V. PRIORITY AREA 3: STATE CHILD CARE DATA AND RESEARCH CAPACITY PROJECTS
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A.   Purpose

The purpose of this priority area is to assist State CCDF Lead Agencies in improving their capacity to conduct policy-relevant research and analysis in order to design and implement child care policies and programs that promote positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

The primary goal is to create a statewide research infrastructure to better understand child care needs, services, and outcomes for families in the context of social, economic and cultural change. Specific objectives include to: 1) improve the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of CCDF data; 2) develop or improve analytic linkages with other State and local data systems such as those maintained by child care licensing offices, TANF agencies, and resource and referral networks; 3) encourage collaborative efforts among institutions of higher education, research organizations, policy makers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to promote high quality research; 4) expand the availability of child care research that is specifically responsive to the needs of States and local communities; 5) develop leadership skills in management and

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interpretation of data; and 6) demonstrate effective dissemination strategies and means for informing policy decisions with research results.

Beginning with an assessment of their current CCDF administrative data systems and research needs, each State funded under this priority area will develop and implement a plan for improving its capacity for data collection and analysis and conducting policy relevant research. We anticipate that during the first budget period, some States may need to focus primarily on enhancements to CCDF reporting systems to ensure that their administrative data are valid, reliable and useful for policy analysis. Other States, with more refined child care data systems, will concentrate on developing improved capacity to analyze and interpret administrative data, conduct research, and use data to inform policy and program decisions. Ultimately, it is hoped that these efforts will evolve into a comprehensive strategy for ongoing development of a statewide research infrastructure.

Applicants must demonstrate the need for assistance, commitment to improving the State's capacity for child care research and analysis, and the potential for these grant funds to make a difference. Successful grantees are expected to establish or expand a child care research, analysis and coordinating function, either as a unit within State government or through a contractual relationship with an outside research organization or university. The proposed staff of analysts must have extensive expertise in strategic planning, developing cross-disciplinary and cross-agency partnerships, implementing systems improvements, using large administrative data sets for research and analysis, and evaluating the implications of research findings for policy and program decisions. The grant awards will fund salaries and other expenses, including travel, for at least two full-time professional positions within an analysis unit.

B.   Background Information

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 made substantial changes in the structure of Federal child care assistance by combining four major Federal child care programs into the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). While States have significant flexibility in designing and implementing child care programs under CCDF, they are required to meet certain statutory and regulatory requirements. Among other requirements, this includes the designation of a State Lead Agency, biennial State CCDF Plans that describe how CCDF services will be implemented, and the submission of aggregate and case-level data about the services provided through CCDF.

States must spend at least 70 percent of their CCDF dollars to provide child care services for families who are on or transitioning off TANF or who are at-risk of welfare dependency. Through the use of certificates (vouchers), eligible families must be given access to child care services comparable to those available to families who are not eligible for CCDF assistance. States may also provide child care services through contracts/grants with providers. In their biennial plans to ACF, States provide information about their policies on issues such as family eligibility limits, co-payments, provider reimbursement rates, and provider health and safety requirements.

States must submit aggregate reports to ACF annually. These reports include information on the number of child care providers (by type) that received funding under CCDF, the number of children served by type of payment and child care services, consumer education, and the total unduplicated number of children and families served. Monthly case-level reports (sample or full-population at State option) may be submitted by States on a monthly or quarterly basis. These reports are submitted electronically to ACF via CONNECT:DIRECT, a secure line administered through the Social Security Administration. The case-level reports include total monthly family

income for determining eligibility, county of residence, child gender and month and year of birth, ethnicity and race of children, whether the head of the family is a single parent, sources of family income, month/year when child care assistance started, type of child care used and whether the provider was a relative, monthly family co-payment, monthly amount to be paid to the provider, total hours of care in the month, Social Security Number of the head of household (if voluntarily provided), and reasons for care.

These aggregate and case-level CCDF reports are an important source of information about national, State, and local child care services and systems including child care supply and demand. As the Child Care Policy Research Consortium and Research Partnerships have demonstrated, when analyzed and readily-accessible, administrative data can be a valuable tool in helping policy makers make child care policy and program decisions. Through their analysis of CCDF administrative data at the cross-State, State, and local levels, the Partnerships are advancing our knowledge about the child care choices parents make, the supply of care in low-income neighborhoods, practices believed to improve care (e.g., provider accreditation, teacher training and education, reimbursement rates), the types of arrangements used by low-income parents, and their utilization of child care subsidies. By linking CCDF data with employment, resource and referral, and licensing data sources, the Partnerships have been able to study such topics as the relationship between availability of subsidized care and entry into the job market, the industries/employers likely to have employees who receive child care assistance, and the interrelationships between regulations and supply of care.

However, administrators indicate that they face many barriers to using child care research and data to inform their decisions. In an exploration of the research needs of State child care administrators, the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership conducted a national research roundtable that involved a number of State child care administrators. That study, reported in an issue brief, Research and Child Care Policy: A View from the States, found that administrators were much more likely to be influenced by research conducted by their own agency as opposed to an outside organization. When asked about barriers to using research, administrators most frequently indicated that their agency was not able to conduct the kinds of research that would be useful in making policy and program decisions. The issue brief strongly recommends that research capacity be developed at national, State, and local levels and that funds be directed to States to help States develop the infrastructure to conduct child care policy-relevant research starting with the data required under Federal CCDF reporting requirements.

Therefore, in this priority area, the Child Care Bureau seeks to work with States to improve the reliability of administrative data collected in the course of providing CCDF services, to assist States in improving their ability to analyze and interpret the data they collect, and to encourage State-level policy-relevant research. As a result, States will have improved information on which to make policy and program decisions and, nationally, the Child Care Bureau will be better able to meet its obligation to report to Congress regarding the services provided under CCDF.

C.   Eligible Applicants

State and Territorial Lead Agencies administering child care programs under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) of 1990 as amended by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

D.   Number of Awards

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Five to six State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Grants will be funded in Fiscal Year 2001, subject to the availability of funds and results of the evaluation process.

E.   Project Duration, Funding Levels and Budget Periods

State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Grants will be awarded for project periods of up to three years. The Child Care Bureau expects to invest up to $250,000 during the initial 12-month funding period for each project. Non-competitive applications for continuation of State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects will be considered in fiscal years 2002 and 2003 with up to $250,000 per project being available for a 12-month period. Applications for continuation grants funded beyond the 12-month budget period, but within the 36-month project period, will be entertained in the subsequent year on a noncompetitive basis, subject to the availability of funds from future appropriations, satisfactory progress of the grantee, and a determination that continued funding is the best interest of the government. The project period for three-year grants is from September 30, 2001-September 29, 2004.

F.   Federal Share

To maximize the Federal investment in the State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects and in the interest of project sustainability, a financial commitment by the applicant organization (or other participating entity) is required. The grantee must provide at least 20 percent of the total approved cost of the project. The total approved cost is the sum of the Federal share and the non-Federal share. Therefore, a project requesting $250,000 per budget period must include a match of at least $62,500. A project receiving the maximum $750,000 during the three-year project period must include a match of at least $187,500 for the three-year project period. Applicants are encouraged to meet their match requirements through cash contributions. However, the non-Federal share may be in-kind contributions. Grantees will be held accountable for the commitment of non-Federal resources and failure to provide the required amount will result in a disallowance of unmatched Federal funds.

G.   Other Financial Requirements

Funds available under this priority area may not be used to pay for existing positions currently funded using Federal, State, or local money. In addition, applicants are advised that funds under this priority are not intended to support the purchase of computer hardware or software.

H.   Data Ownership

Raw data are the property of the agency or organization where the data reside. Working data files constructed for research belong to the grantee that is carrying-out the research, but analyses of those data may not be released without the approval of the agency that owns the original data. Once a study has been completed and released, clean, documented public use files must be prepared and archived according to specifications supplied by the Child Care Bureau. These public use data files will be the property of the Federal government and will remain in the public domain for secondary analysis by other researchers.

I.   Project Description and Application Requirements

1.   Contents and Format of Application

Clarity and conciseness are of utmost importance. ACYF strongly encourages applicants to limit their application to 100 pages, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins and 12 point fonts. The total page limitation applies to both the narrative text and supporting materials.

Applicants are cautioned to include all required forms and materials, organized according to the required format. (The description of the contents of the application materials listed below is included in Appendix 1 of this announcement.) The application packet must include the following items in order:

    a.   Cover Letter
    b.   Standard Federal Forms
          Standard Application for Federal Assistance (forms 424 and 424A)
          Assurances: Non-construction Programs (form 424B)
          Certifications regarding Lobbying
          Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
          Certification regarding Drug-free Workplace Requirements
          Certification regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other
          Responsibility Matters
          Protection of Human Subjects
          Certification regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke
    c.   Table of Contents
    d.   Project Abstract
    e.   Project Narrative Statement
    f.   Appendices
          Contact Information for all Key Staff
          Resumes
          Letters of Support, if appropriate
          Other

2. Project Narrative Statement

The project narrative statement contains most of the information on which applications will be competitively reviewed. The Project Narrative should be carefully developed in accordance with the research goals and expectations described for the priority area in which the applicant is submitting a proposal, the requirements listed below and described in the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2 in this announcement), and the evaluation criteria and selection factors described in section "J" below.

The following sections from the Uniform Project Description (Appendix 2) should be included in the Project Narrative Statement of the application for State Child Care Data and Research Capacity projects:

    a.   Objectives and Need for Assistance
    b.   Approach
    c.   Organizational Profiles
          Management Plan
          Staff Qualification and Commitment
          Organizational Capacity and Resources
    d. Budget and Budget Justification

J.   Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to review and evaluate each application under this priority area. Each of the criteria should be addressed in the project description section of the application. The point values indicate the maximum numerical weight each criterion will be accorded in the review process. Note that the highest possible score an application can receive is 100 points.

CRITERION 1: OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE (35 Points)

In this section, applicants are expected to provide a clear and comprehensive description of their agency's current capacity to collect, analyze and report child care administrative data. This description should include data collection, analysis and reporting required by the State and Federal governments, as well as reports designed for the legislature and other constituencies. Applicants are encouraged to provide a description of the internal and external information needs of the agency, constituencies for information, and the types of data required or requested by these agencies, organizations or groups.

Applicants are expected to describe the current structure, management, and process for collecting, analyzing and reporting data. This description should include a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current operating system and analytic components. The need for assistance should be clearly stated.

In addition, applicants should describe the research and evaluation that would be conducted by the proposed analysis unit. Applicants are encouraged to identify specific research questions to be addressed by the unit and explain how the agency's data systems would be used to answer these questions.

Specific Review Criteria

- Extent to which the applicant describes current methods and systems used by the agency to collect and compile the child care data required by the State and Federal government (including data sources, inputs, and reports) and describes the strengths and weaknesses of these systems. Linkages to TANF, licensing, and resource and referral systems should be described.

- Extent to which the applicant describes the internal and external information needs of the agency, constituencies for information, and the types of data required or requested by these agencies, organizations or groups.

- Extent to which the goals and objectives of the proposed analysis unit are explained clearly and are appropriate to this priority area, i.e., how the proposed unit would assist the agency in improving the State's capacity to meet internal and external information needs and its capacity for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

- Extent to which the applicant presents a clear vision of the data analysis systems to be developed, including a discussion of the contextual factors that would facilitate or hinder the formation of the analysis unit.

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- Extent to which the applicant's vision for a Statewide infrastructure for child care research and analysis is well conceptualized, feasible, and could continue evolving after the project period ends.

- Extent to which the applicant presents realistic examples of the research questions to be addressed, the types of studies to be conducted by the proposed analysis unit, and explains how these research questions and studies relate to State child care research priorities as well as the priorities and questions outlined in this announcement.

- Extent to which the applicant explains how the proposed research, evaluations and studies would contribute to the development of knowledge about the relationship between child care policies and programs and outcomes for children and families.

- Extent to which the applicant describes how the findings from the proposed studies would be used to inform policy and improve the quality of services.

- Extent to which the applicant clearly describes the types of products that would be produced by the analysis unit and the benefits that the State and other constituencies would derive from these reports and products.

CRITERION 2: APPROACH (30 Points)

In this section, applicants are expected to describe in detail how they will implement the proposed analysis unit, improve the State's capacity for collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data, and conduct child care policy-relevant research. Applicants are advised to present their assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of an in-house analysis unit versus a contractual partner. Applicants should describe in detail why they have selected one approach over the other. The justification should include a description of how the chosen approach will mesh with current information demands, operations and procedures, management structure, staffing and other resources.

Regardless of the approach selected (in-house or contractual), the applicant is expected to present an implementation plan and describe in detail how the unit will be established, managed, operated and evaluated. This section should also include a plan for sustaining the unit after Federal funding has ceased.

This section of the Project Narrative Statement also requires that the applicant describe the technical approach for addressing issues and achieving the objectives described in Criterion above. This should include a detailed plan that identifies goals and objectives, relates those goals and objectives to the strengths and weakness identified regarding the State's current methods and systems used to collect and compile administrative data, and provides a work plan identifying specific activities necessary to accomplish the stated goals and objectives. The plan must demonstrate that each of the project objectives and activities support the needs identified and can be accomplished with the available or expected resources during the proposed project period.

For any research that is proposed within the project period, a methodological discussion must be provided that includes technical details of the proposed research design, including: 1) conceptual framework for the research; 2) research questions, hypotheses and variables; 3) data sources; 4) linkages with other research; 5) data processing and statistical analysis; and 6) product development and information dissemination. (For more details on the information required in this section, see Criterion 2, Research Design and Methodology, in Evaluation Criteria for Field Initiated Child Care Research Projects.)

When specific studies are proposed, applicants are asked to provide a flow chart or table showing the interrelationships among the proposed research issues, questions, variables, and data elements.

Specific Review Criteria

- Extent to which the applicant presents an informed assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of an in-house analysis unit versus a contractual partner.

- Extent to which the justification for selecting the proposed approach is explained in detail, including a description of how the chosen approach will mesh with current information demands, operations and procedures, management structure, staffing and other resources.

- Extent to which the proposed implementation plan describes the function and scope of activities and indicates when the objectives and major activities under each objective will be accomplished.

- Extent to which the selected approach and implementation plan are appropriate and feasible and will build an analytic capacity for the agency; the description should present a feasible method for identifying research priorities, and determining research studies to be conducted.

- Extent to which the design for any proposed studies appropriately link critical research issues, questions, variables, data sources, samples, and analyses; employ technically sound and appropriate approaches; reflect sensitivity to technical, logistical, cultural and ethical issues that may arise; include realistic strategies for the resolution of difficulties; adequately protect human subjects, confidentiality of data, and consent procedures, as appropriate; include an effective plan for dissemination and utilization of the data; and effectively utilize collaborative strategies, as appropriate to the project goals and design.

- Extent to which the implementation plan provides an appropriate and feasible method for institutionalizing and sustaining the analytic unit after Federal funding as ceased.

CRITERION 3: ORGANIZATION PROFILES (25 Points)

Applicants need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to implement the proposed project. This criterion consists of three broad topics: (1) management plan, (2) staff qualifications and commitment, and (3) organizational capacity and resources.

Management Plan (10 Points)

Overview

Applicants are expected to present a sound and feasible management plan for implementing the analysis unit. This section should detail how the unit will be structured and managed, how the timeliness of activities will be ensured, how quality control will be maintained, and how costs will be controlled. The role and responsibilities of the lead agency should be clearly defined and, if appropriate, applicants should discuss the management and coordination of activities carried out by any partners, subcontractors and consultants.

Applicants are required to provide a plan that describes the role, responsibilities and time commitments of each proposed staff position, including consultants, subcontractors and/or partners. The plan should include a list of organizations and consultants who will work with the program along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

Applicants are expected to have the project fully staffed and ready for implementation as quickly as possible after notification of the grant award. Therefore, strategies for ensuring timely staffing and implementation should be clearly and succinctly presented in the management plan. The narrative should include a description of the timeline for hiring and procurement in the State, and methods that the applicant will use to expedite the process.

Applicants are also expected to produce a timeline that presents a reasonable schedule of target dates, accomplishments and deliverables by quarter. The timeline should include the sequence and timing of the major tasks and subtasks, important milestones, reports, and completion dates. The proposal should also discuss factors that may affect project implementation or the outcomes and present realistic strategies for the resolution of these difficulties. For instance, downtime due to staff vacancies at start should be reflected. Additionally, if appropriate, applicants should present a plan for training project staff, as well as staff of cooperating organizations.

Specific Review Criteria

- Extent to which the management plan provides a diagram showing the organizational structure of the project and the functional relationships among components.

- Extent to which the management plan presents a realistic approach to achieving the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

- Extent to which the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency are clearly defined and the time commitments of the project director and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Staff Qualifications and Commitment (10 Points)

<u>Overview</u>

In this section, applicants should describe the qualifications of the project manager and key staff, including analysts who will staff the analysis unit and the positions they will fill. Applicants are also expected to describe the educational background and professional experience of other professionals who will form the interdisciplinary analysis unit or organization. (Brief resumes should be provided.) The proposed staff should include persons with educational backgrounds and professional experiences in early childhood services, child development, social work, public policy, economics and other social science disciplines such that the analysis unit or organization will be able to conduct research on a broad range of child care issues and approaches.

<u>Specific Review Criteria</u>

- Extent to which the proposed project director, key project staff (including analysts to be hired) and consultants have the necessary technical skill, knowledge and experience to successfully carry out their responsibilities.

- Extent to which staffing is adequate for the proposed project, including administration, program operations, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination of findings.

- Extent to which the applicant demonstrates executive level support and commitment from within the CCDF Lead Agency.

Organizational Capacity and Resources (5 Points)

<u>Overview</u>

Applicants must show that they have the organizational capacity and resources to form, manage, operate, evaluate and sustain an analysis unit, including the capacity to resolve a wide variety of technical and management problems that may occur. If the proposal involves partnering and/or subcontracting with other agencies/organizations, then the proposal should include an organizational capability statement for each participating organization documenting the ability of the partners and/or subcontractors to carry out their assigned roles and functions.

<u>Specific Review Criteria</u>

- Extent to which the applicant organization and partnering organizations collectively have experience and resources required to form, manage, operate and sustain an analysis unit.

- Extent to which the applicant has adequate organizational resources for the proposed project, including administration, program operations, data processing and analysis, reporting and dissemination of findings.

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CRITERION 4: BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (10 Points)

Describe the nature and extent of financial participation from all sources during the proposed project period. Present a detailed budget for each 12-month interval of the proposed project period, i.e., the 12 month budget period to be funded under this announcement and subsequent budget periods that may be funded under a non-competing continuation process. Include a detailed budget narrative that describes and justifies line item expenses within the object class categories listed on the Standard Form 424A. (Line item allocations and justification are required for both Federal and non-Federal funds.) If project funds will be subcontracted, a detailed budget for the use of those funds must be also included. In estimating costs, applicant should consider down time due to staff vacancies, administrative processes, etc.

The proposed budget should include sufficient funding to cover travel expenses for a key person from the project and the evaluator to attend two two-day meetings of grantees in the Washington DC area hosted by the Child Care Bureau. Attendance at these meetings is a grant requirement.

Specific Review Criteria

- Extent to which the costs of the proposed program are reasonable in view of the activities to be carried out, that funds are appropriately allocated across component areas, and that the budget is sufficient to accomplish the objectives.

- Extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has sufficient fiscal and accounting capacity to ensure prudent use, proper disbursement, and accurate accounting of funds.

- Extent to which applicant's budget is sufficient to endure that unanticipated problems can be resolved and that the project will be completed on time and with a high degree of quality.

PART VI.   APPENDICES (back to top)

A.   Appendix 1: Contents and Format of the Application

Clarity and conciseness are of utmost importance. ACYF strongly encourages applicants to limit their applications to 100 pages, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins and 12 point fonts. This includes the entire Project Narrative Statement including text, tables, charts, graphs, resumes, corporate statements and appendices.

Applicants are cautioned to include all required forms and materials, organized according to the required format. The application packet must include the following items in order:

1.   A cover letter that includes the announcement number, priority area and contact information.

2.   Standard Federal Forms

    a.   Standard Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424 fact sheet and SF 424A) must be included with the application.

b. Standard Form 424B, "Assurances: Non-Construction Programs." Applicants must sign and return the Standard Form 424B with their applications.

c. Certifications Regarding Lobbying. Applicants must provide a certification regarding lobbying when applying for an award in excess of $100,000. Applicants must sign and return the certification with their applications.

d. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities. Applicants must disclose lobbying activities on the Standard Form LLL when applying for an award in excess of $100,000. Applicants who have used non-Federal funds for lobbying activities in connection with receiving assistance under this announcement shall complete a disclosure form to report lobbying. Applicants must sign and return the disclosure form, if applicable, with their applications.

e. Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements. Applicants must make the appropriate certification of their compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988. By signing and submitting the application, the applicant is providing the certification and need not mail back the certification with the application.

f. Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters. Applicants must make the appropriate certification that they are not presently debarred, suspended, or otherwise ineligible for an award. By signing and submitting the application, the applicant is providing the certification and need not mail back the certification with the application.

g. Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance, Identification, Certification, and Declaration.

h. Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke. Applicants must make the appropriate certification of their compliance. By signing and submitting the application, the applicant is providing the certification and need not mail back the certification with the application.

3. For-profit entities wishing to receive a grant directly must provide a letter indicating their willingness to waive their fees. Non-profit organizations must submit proof of non-profit status in the application at the time of submission. The applicant can demonstrate proof of non-profit status in any one of three ways:

a. By providing a copy of the organization's listing in the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in Section 501(c3) of the IRS code;

b. By providing a copy of the currently valid IRS tax exemption certificate; or

c. By providing a copy of the articles of incorporation bearing the seal of the State in which the corporation or association is domiciled.

4. Executive Order 12372 - Single Point of Contact

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

All States and Territories except Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, American Samoa and Palau have elected to participate in the Executive Order process and have established Single Points of Contact (SPOCs). Applicants from these twenty-four jurisdictions need take no action regarding E.O. 12372. Applicants for projects to be administered by Federally-recognized Indian Tribes are also exempt from the requirements of E.O. 12372. Otherwise, applicants should contact their SPOCs as soon as possible to alert them of the prospective applications and receive any necessary instructions. Applicants must submit any required material to the SPOCs as soon as possible so that the program office can obtain and review SPOC comments as part of the award process. It is imperative that the applicant submit all required materials, if any, to the SPOC and indicate the date of this submittal (or the date of contact if no submittal is required) on the Standard Form 424, item 16a.

Under 45 CFR 100.8(a)(2), a SPOC has 60 days from the application deadline to comment on proposed new or competing continuation awards.

SPOCs are encouraged to eliminate the submission of routine endorsements as official recommendations.

Additionally, SPOCs are requested to clearly differentiate between mere advisory comments and those official State process recommendations which may trigger the accommodation or explain rule.

When comments are submitted directly to ACF, they should be addressed to: Marguerite Pridgen, Office of Grants Management, 330 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20447, Attn: Child Care Policy Research Discretionary Grants.   A list of the Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) for each State and Territory can be found on the following web site: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html.

5. Table of Contents

6. Project Abstract (not to exceed one page) for use in official briefings, decision packages, and public announcement of awards.

7. Project Narrative Statement (See instructions in Appendix 2 and Evaluation Criteria for each Priority described in this announcement.)

8. Appendices: All supporting materials and documents should be organized into appropriate appendices and securely bound in to the application package. Applicants are reminded that the total page limitation applies to both narrative text and supporting materials.

   a.   Contact Information for all Key Staff

     b. Resumes

     c. Letters of Support, if appropriate

     d. Other

 9. Number of Copies and Binding: An original and two copies of the complete application packet must be submitted. Each copy of the application should be securely stapled in the upper left-hand corner, clipped, or secured at the top with a two-hole punch fastener. Because each application will be duplicated for the review panel, do not use non-removable binders. Do not include tabs, plastic inserts, brochures, videos, or any other items that cannot be photocopied.

B. Appendix 2: <u>UNIFORM PROJECT DESCRIPTION</u>

PURPOSE

The project description provides a major means by which an application is evaluated and ranked to compete with other applications for available assistance. The project description should be concise and complete and should address the activity for which Federal funds are being requested. Supporting documents should be included where they can present information clearly and succinctly. In preparing your project description, all information requested through each specific evaluation criteria should be provided. Awarding offices use this and other information in making their funding recommendations. It is important, therefore, that this information be included in the application.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

ACF is particularly interested in specific factual information and statements of measurable goals in quantitative terms. Project descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance, not length. Extensive exhibits are not required. Cross-referencing should be used rather than repetition. Supporting information concerning activities that will not be directly funded by the grant or information that does not directly pertain to an integral part of the grant-funded activity should be placed in an appendix.

Pages should be numbered and a table of contents should be included for easy reference.

INTRODUCTION

Applicants required to submit a full project description shall prepare the project description statement in accordance with the following instructions and the specified evaluation criteria. The instructions give a broad overview of what your project description should include while the evaluation criteria expands and clarifies more program-specific information that is needed.

<u>PROJECT SUMMARY/ABSTRACT</u>

Provide a summary of the project description (a page or less) with reference to the funding request.

<u>OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE</u>

Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s) requiring a solution. The need for assistance must be demonstrated and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated; supporting documentation, such as letters of support and testimonials from concerned interests other than the applicant, may be included. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included or referred to in the endnotes/footnotes. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as needed. In developing the project description, the applicant may volunteer or be requested to provide information on the total range of projects currently being conducted and supported or to be initiated, some of which may be outside the scope of the program announcement.

APPROACH

Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Account for all functions or activities identified in the application. Cite factors that might accelerate or decelerate the work and state your reason for taking the proposed approach rather than others. Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement.

Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections 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. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

If any data is to be collected, maintained, and/or disseminated, clearance may be required from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This clearance pertains to any "collection of information that is conducted or sponsored by ACF."

List organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Following are requests for additional information that need to be included in the application.

Staff and Position Data

Provide a biographical sketch for each key person appointed and a job description for each vacant key position. A biographical sketch will also be required for new key staff as appointed.

Organizational Profiles

Provide information on the applicant organization(s) and cooperating partners such as: organizational charts, financial statements, audit reports or statements from CPAs/Licensed Public Accountants, Employer Identification Numbers, names of bond carriers, contact persons and telephone numbers, child care licenses and other documentation of professional accreditation, information on compliance with Federal/State/local government standards, documentation of experience in the program area, and other pertinent information. Any non-profit organization submitting an application must submit proof of its non-profit status in its application at the time of submission.

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The non-profit agency can accomplish this by providing a copy of the applicant's listing in the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) most recent list of tax-exempt organizations, described in Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code, by providing a copy of the currently valid IRS tax exemption certificate, or by providing a copy of the articles of incorporation bearing the seal of the State in which the corporation or association is domiciled.

<u>Third Party Agreements</u>

Include written agreements between grantees and sub-grantees or subcontractors or other cooperating entities. These agreements must detail scope of work to be performed, work schedules, remuneration, and other terms and conditions that structure or define the relationship.

<u>Letters of Support</u>

Provide statements from community, public and commercial leaders that support the project proposed for funding. All submissions should be included in the application OR by application deadline.

<u>BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION</u>

Provide line item detail and detailed calculations for each budget object class identified on the Budget Information form. Detailed calculations must include estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated. The detailed budget must also include a breakout by the funding sources identified in Block 15 of the SF-424.

Provide a narrative budget justification that describes how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity, reasonableness, and allocability of the proposed costs.

<u>GENERAL</u>

The following guidelines are for preparing the budget and budget justification. Both Federal and non-Federal resources shall be detailed and justified in the budget and narrative justification. For purposes of preparing the budget and budget justification, "Federal resources" refers only to the ACF grant for which you are applying. Non-Federal resources are all other Federal and non-Federal resources. It is suggested that budget amounts and computations be presented in a columnar format: first column, object class categories; second column, Federal budget; next column(s), non-Federal budget(s), and last column, total budget. The budget justification should be a narrative.

<u>Personnel</u>

Description: Costs of employee salaries and wages.

Justification: Identify the project director or principal investigator, if known. For each staff person, provide the 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. Do not include the costs of consultants or personnel costs of delegate agencies or of specific project(s) or businesses to be financed by the applicant.

<u>Fringe Benefits</u>

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Description: Costs of employee fringe benefits unless treated as part of an approved indirect cost rate.

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

Travel

Description: Costs of project-related travel by employees of the applicant organization (does not include costs of consultant travel).

Justification: For each trip, show the total number of traveler(s), travel destination, duration of trip, per diem, mileage allowances, if privately owned vehicles will be used, and other transportation costs and subsistence allowances. Travel costs for key staff to attend ACF-sponsored workshops should be detailed in the budget.

Equipment

Description: "Equipment" means an article of non-expendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which 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.)

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 or disposal of the equipment after the project ends. An applicant organization that uses its own definition for equipment should provide a copy of its policy or section of its policy which includes the equipment definition.

Supplies

Description: Costs of all tangible personal property other than that included under the Equipment category.

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

Contractual

Description: Costs of all contracts for services and goods except for those, which belong under other categories such as equipment, supplies, construction, etc. Third-party evaluation contracts (if applicable) and contracts with secondary recipient organizations, including delegate agencies and specific project(s) or businesses to be financed by the applicant, should be included under this category.

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Justification: All procurement transactions shall be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition. Recipients and subrecipients, other than States that are required to use Part 92 procedures, must justify any anticipated procurement action that is expected to be awarded without competition and exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold fixed at $100,000. Recipients might be required to make available to ACF pre-award review and procurement documents, such as request for proposals or invitations for bids, independent cost estimates, etc.

Note: Whenever the applicant intends to delegate part of the project to another agency, the applicant must provide a detailed budget and budget narrative for each delegate agency, by agency title, along with the required supporting information referred to in these instructions.

<u>Other</u>

Enter the total of all other costs. Such costs, where applicable and appropriate, may include but are not limited to insurance, food, medical and dental costs (noncontractual), professional services costs, space and equipment rentals, printing and publication, computer use, training costs, such as tuition and stipends, staff development costs, and administrative costs.

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

<u>Indirect Charges</u>

Description: Total amount of indirect costs. This category should be used only when 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 that will charge indirect costs to the grant must enclose a copy of the current rate agreement. If the applicant organization is in the process of initially developing or renegotiating a rate, it should immediately upon notification that an award will be made, develop a tentative indirect cost rate proposal based on its most recently completed fiscal year in accordance with the principles set forth in the cognizant agency's guidelines for establishing indirect cost rates, and submit it to the cognizant agency. Applicants awaiting approval of their indirect cost proposals may also request indirect costs. It should be noted that when an indirect cost rate is requested, those costs included in the indirect cost pool should not also be charged as direct costs to the grant. Also, if the applicant is requesting a rate which 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.

<u>Non-Federal Resources</u>

Description: Amounts of non-Federal resources that will be used to support the project as identified in Block 15 of the SF-424.

Justification: The firm commitment of these resources must be documented and submitted with the application in order to be given credit in the review process. A detailed budget must be prepared for each funding source.

Dated:_____

James A. Harrell
Acting Commissioner
Administration on Children,
  Youth and Families