



Administration for Children and Families

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Dissertation Grants

HHS-2023-ACF-OPRE-YR-0153

Application Due Date: 05/18/2023

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Funding Opportunity Title:

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Dissertation Grants

Announcement Type:

Initial

Funding Opportunity Number:

HHS-2023-ACF-OPRE-YR-0153

Primary CFDA Number:

93.600

Due Date for Applications:

05/18/2023

Executive Summary**Notice:**

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

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is soliciting applications for Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Dissertation Grants. Funds support dissertation research by advanced graduate students working in partnership with Head Start programs and with faculty mentors. These grants focus on building capacity in the research field by:

- (1) addressing questions relevant to early childhood programs that serve children and families with low incomes,
- (2) supporting applied experience with collaboration with participating program partners, and
- (3) fostering mentoring relationships between faculty members and doctoral students.

OPRE is interested in research that directly informs local, state, or federal policies and is relevant to multiple early care and education settings. Applicants must demonstrate an established partnership with their Head Start program partner(s) (and other early care and education program partners, if applicable) that should be apparent throughout the research plan, from development and refinement of the research questions through the proposed data collection or secondary analyses of data, interpretation, and dissemination of findings. Eligible tribally controlled land grant colleges and universities, historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic--serving institutions, and faith-based institutions of higher education are encouraged to apply. The applicant organization must have a history of research and federal funding oversight and must have appropriate research support resources to support the student. The faculty mentor who will serve as Principal Investigator (PI) must have a Ph.D. or equivalent in the respective field and conduct research as a primary professional responsibility. Faculty mentors with doctoral training and research expertise must be able to provide proper supervision and quality control over the project and interactions with participating programs to help ensure successful completion of sound dissertation research that addresses critical questions of interest to program(s) and

ACF. To be eligible for award, the graduate student must provide evidence of an approved dissertation proposal with their application. This is a change from previous years when applicants were given additional time to submit evidence of an approved dissertation proposal after the application due date. **The 2023 application due date and the due date for the evidence of an approved dissertation proposal are the same and are specified in this NOFO.** For further information about previous Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant recipients, please refer to <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-research-scholars-head-start-dissertation-grants>.

For more information about OPRE, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>. For information about the Office of Head Start (OHS) and Head Start programs, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>. Please subscribe to this forecast at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) to receive notifications of any updates.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority

Section 649 of the Head Start Act, as amended by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, codified at 42 U.S.C. 9844.

Description

A. Background

Head Start was created in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and was reauthorized in 2007 through the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The federal Head Start program is administered by OHS, ACF, HHS. The program gives grants to local public and private agencies in the non-profit and for-profit sectors to provide comprehensive child development services to low-income children and families. Head Start agencies that provide services to children and families must meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the requirements set forth in the Head Start Act of 2007. See <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/polic y/45-cfr-chap-xiii> for more information about the Head Start Program Performance Standards and <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/head-start-act> for more information about the Head Start Act of 2007. The program's two components, Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start, collectively focus on children from birth to age 5. EHS serves pregnant women and children up to age 3, and programs may enroll a child at any point in this age range. Head Start serves preschool-age children, who can enter the program at age 3 years until eligible for school. Eligibility is based on income, level of need, disability status, and other factors. OHS places special emphasis on helping children develop the skills they need to be successful in school. The program also seeks to engage parents in their children's learning and to help them reach their own educational, literacy, and employment goals.

Since 1998, ACF has supported the development of partnerships between Head Start and EHS programs and their local research community through the Head Start Dissertation Grants. These awards attract applications from leading researchers and their graduate students specializing in social sciences, education, health, or other relevant disciplines. In close collaboration with their Head Start and EHS partners, these researchers conduct high-quality projects that directly address the needs of early childhood programs, policymakers, and low-income children and families.

This funding mechanism also builds research capacity for addressing questions of importance to

early childhood policy and practice. The grants foster the mentor-student relationship between leading researchers and their graduate students, enhancing the quality of the current work and building the skills of the graduate student. Within this supportive relationship, student researchers learn both theory and the hands-on features of conducting applied research in partnership with community service organizations. The researchers often contribute directly to their local Head Start and EHS partner programs (e.g., providing trainings, establishing databases, identifying key resources, and pursuing research that addresses questions of interest to programs), and many continue to make significant contributions to the early childhood, Head Start, and EHS research fields throughout their careers.

Grant recipients will use rigorous methods to study their proposed research questions. Methods may include quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and secondary analyses approaches. Methods should be chosen that are appropriate to the state of the field for the given research questions and the state of knowledge and understanding of the proposed constructs under study. Student researchers will use an equity lens to the extent possible in their current work, and research questions, analyses and interpretation will identify paths for future work to advance understanding of equity issues for Head Start/EHS.

To ensure that research is responsive to both the changing needs of families and children with low incomes and to questions of interest to OHS, local Head Start and/or EHS (Head Start/EHS) programs, and the broader early care and education community, graduate students are required to: (1) develop projects that clearly link to Head Start/EHS program goals, and (2) consult with Head Start/EHS programs in the design and implementation of their projects. Partnerships between the graduate student, his/her faculty mentor, and Head Start/EHS programs are especially significant, as they ensure the research will be relevant to the Head Start/EHS program and/or the Early Care and Education (ECE) field and the populations served and help to foster the skills necessary to successfully contribute to both the policy and scientific communities. For information about OHS, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>. To learn more about various topics, including the Head Start Program Performance Standards, Monitoring and Designation Renewal Systems, and Technical Assistance System, please see the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>.

B. Goals and Requirements of the Head Start Dissertation Grants

The Head Start Dissertation Grants aim to support research that has direct implications for Head Start/EHS policy and practice; to foster collaboration between researchers and Head Start/EHS programs; to facilitate connections between graduate students, senior researchers in the field, and key stakeholders; and to support mentoring relationships between faculty mentors and doctoral students. Specifically, the goals of the grant program are as follows:

- 1. Build capacity in the early care and education field by supporting high-quality dissertation research and student-faculty collaboration and mentorship.**

The Head Start Dissertation Grants support the training and professional development of the next generation of early care and education researchers. Under the support of this grant, students are expected to become autonomous researchers with specialized knowledge and skills to conduct rigorous research that is responsive to the unique context of the Head Start/EHS program, including its policies, practices, and populations served. Previous Head Start Scholars have made significant contributions to the Head Start/EHS field.

The Head Start Dissertation Grants will fund original student dissertation work. Each scholar will work in partnership with a faculty mentor. These mentor-student relationships will: a) support the scholar's independent line of research; b) encourage collaboration with qualified, experienced researchers in the field; and c) further the scholar's graduate training and professional development in policy-relevant, applied research. The faculty mentor, who will serve as the PI for the grant, must have a doctoral degree and research expertise that is aligned with the goals of the proposed project in order to provide proper mentorship and guidance for the proposed activities. Students may also seek guidance from other qualified professionals, in addition to their faculty mentor, to support the successful execution of their projects.

- 1. Conduct rigorous research that has the capacity to inform Head Start/EHS programs, policies, and practices.**

The Head Start Dissertation Grants program supports high-quality dissertation projects that address issues of immediate relevance to OHS, local Head Start/EHS programs, and the broader early care and education community (including child care, pre-k, home-visiting, and/or others). Projects should contribute to the broader knowledge base by conducting applied research with clear significance to the Head Start/EHS program goals, policies, services, and/or populations served. All funded projects will use the most appropriate and rigorous research methods to answer the selected research question(s). This award may be used to fund the collection of new data and/or the analysis of existing datasets using rigorous qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches.

See *Section I.C. Program Description, Priority Topics for this Opportunity* for research topics of particular interest for this year's awards.

- 1. Support active communication, collaboration, and partnerships between researchers and Head Start/EHS programs.**

The Head Start Dissertation Grants aim to foster connections between researchers and Head Start/EHS programs in order to: a) ensure the funded research is responsive to the changing needs of Head Start/EHS programs, policies, and communities; and b) increase programs' capacity to understand and use research. To this end, partnerships between the graduate student, their mentor, and the Head Start/EHS program are an essential component of the grant program. Partnerships ensure the research will be relevant to Head Start/EHS and the ECE field more broadly and will teach the graduate student necessary skills in partnership building that will inform their continued contributions to the policy and scientific communities.

Scholars must maintain a collaborative partnership with Head Start/EHS program(s). Scholars' close partnership must be evidenced within the development of their proposal and selection and refinement of their research questions. Scholars are expected to carry out a responsive, culturally sensitive, tailored plan for engaging with their collaborative partners throughout the entire project and, if applicable through data collection, with participating families and children. Consultation and collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders is expected for all projects, including those proposing secondary analysis of existing data sources. Head Start dissertation grant scholars will also engage their collaborative partners during the interpretation and dissemination of findings. Gathering feedback and input will greatly strengthen the research questions, analyses plans, and interpretation of results.

For the Head Start Locator, please visit: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>.

- 1. Foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research, policy, and practice communities.**

Results and implications of the studies funded through this opportunity should be shared with appropriate research, policy, and practice audiences. Participation in conferences, meetings, and dissemination activities facilitates connections between graduate students, senior researchers in the field, and key stakeholders. In order to facilitate communication and dissemination of research, scholars are required to participate in the following activities:

a. *Conferences.* For each budget period of the award (e.g., from September 30, 2023–September 29, 2024), the student and faculty mentor are required to attend *two* conferences:

1. The Annual Meeting of the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC). This 2-day meeting is typically held in Washington, DC (although could be held virtually) and brings together OPRE grant recipients, contracted researchers funded by ACF, and Head Start and CCDF administrators to discuss early care and education research. To learn about previous CCEEPRC meetings, please visit: <https://www.researchconnections.org/federal-efforts/meetings/child-care-and-early-education-policy-research-consortium-cceeprc-meetings>
2. ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC). This 3-day meeting is typically held in Washington DC (although could be held virtually), during alternating years. To learn more about previous NRCEC meetings, please visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/events/head-start-national-research-conferences>.
3. During a year in which NRCEC is not hosted, students should attend a professional society conference that corresponds to their project or area of expertise (e.g., Society for Research in Child Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children).

b. *Meetings.* Students and their faculty mentors are required to attend the annual Early Care and Education Scholars Grant Recipient Meeting. Whenever possible, the Grant Recipient Meeting takes 2 days and occurs prior to or subsequent to another required event (so as to reduce travel requirements).

c. *Dissemination.* The scholar is expected to prepare and carry out a thorough dissemination plan to effectively translate and share project findings with researchers, policymakers, and collaborative partners. This may include the development of manuscripts, briefs, posters, infographics, presentations, briefings, webinars, articles for inclusion in partner newsletters, and/or other products that would effectively communicate to key audiences. ACF seeks to promote transparency in the conduct of research and evaluations and to support making data available for potential secondary analyses (see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/acf-evaluation-policy> for the ACF Evaluation Policy). Grant recipients will consult with the Federal Program Officer and the Child and Family Data Archive to determine whether the project data and supporting metadata would meet the basic requirements for archiving (see <https://www.childandfamilydataarchive.org/cfda/pages/cfda/share.html> for information about data archiving).

When issuing statements, press releases, publications, requests for proposal, bid solicitations and other documents such as tool kits, resource guides, websites, and presentations (hereafter “statements”) describing the projects or programs funded in whole, or in part, with HHS federal funds, the recipient must clearly state the following:

1. the percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the program or project funded with federal money; and,
2. the percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program funded by non-governmental sources.

When issuing statements resulting from activities supported by HHS financial assistance, the recipient entity must include an acknowledgement of federal assistance using this or a similar statement.

"This [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [is/was] supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$XX with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, [Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#)."

C. Priority Topics for this Opportunity

A range of priority research topics and areas for 2023 are identified. Proposals are encouraged but not required to address these topics.

Top topical priorities for the 2023 opportunity include (but are not limited to) improved understanding and building the evidence-base for the following:

1. Programs' methods and processes for reaching, enrolling, and/or sustaining the participation of the hardest to serve populations in Head Start/EHS (e.g., children/families experiencing deep poverty, homelessness, child maltreatment, foster care, children with an incarcerated or justice-system involved parent);
2. The comprehensive nature of Head Start/EHS and meeting children's/families' needs through comprehensive services (e.g., family engagement, family/parenting support services, economic/self-sufficiency support services, health, mental health, and/or disability services);
3. Innovative strategies to build, retain, and provide professional development supports for a qualified Head Start/EHS workforce, including strategies to increase compensation and other financial supports; a focus on attracting new candidates to the field of ECE, support ECE staff to obtain degrees/credentials, and promote Head Start/EHS staff wellness;
4. Measuring, examining, and improving the features of quality in Head Start/EHS that impact outcomes (e.g., classroom practices, home visiting practices, staff skills/competencies, center, or program-level quality features); and
5. Understanding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Head Start/EHS program services, staff, families, and children, including children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, families experiencing homelessness, and families experiencing trauma.

Additionally, other topics of interest for this opportunity include (but are not limited to):

1. The use of trauma-informed practices in Head Start/EHS;
2. Transitions from Head Start to kindergarten or from EHS to Head Start;
3. Tailoring, differentiating, or individualizing services to the unique needs of Head StartS/EHS children/families;
4. Continuous quality improvement through the use of data and/or other methods in Head

Start/EHS;

5. Cost of quality (e.g., cost per child, cost-effectiveness, resource allocation, blending/braiding of funding sources);
6. Birth-to-five models and conversion of Head Start slots/programs to EHS;
7. Head Start or EHS partnerships and coordination with schools, child care, other state/local ECE programs, state early care and education systems, or other public benefit programs;
8. Improving Head Start/EHS programs, policies, and practices with populations, such as:
 - a. infants, toddlers, and their families;
 - b. engaging incarcerated and justice-system involved parents in early learning;
 - c. American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) children and families;
 - d. migrant/seasonal families and their children;
 - e. children with disabilities and their families; and
 - f. dual language learners.
9. Leadership and management in HSHead Start/EHS programs; and
10. Studies using secondary data to address questions of relevance to Head Start/EHS. Potential projects with secondary data include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)
 - b. the EHS Family and Child Experiences Study (Baby FACES)
 - c. the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AIAN FACES)
 - d. the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)
 - e. the Study of EHS-Child Care Partnerships (CC Partnerships)
 - f. the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study

For further information about these datasets and their locations, please refer to the Child and Family Data Archive at <https://www.childandfamilydataarchive.org/cfda/pages/cfda/data.html> or the Early Childhood Data Sets listed at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/topic/overview/archived-data>.

To identify whether your proposal is relevant to the Head Start/EHS children, families, programs, and/or community systems, please review the Head Start Program Performance Standards at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>.

D. Definitions (for the purposes of this opportunity)

Budget Period: Each 12-month period of time for which funds are made available to a particular grant recipient.

Grant recipient: The eligible entity (e.g., the institute, university, or organization) that was awarded the grant for the project on behalf of the PI/Faculty Mentor.

Principal Investigator (PI): The faculty mentor of the doctoral-level graduate student.

Project Period: The total length of the proposed project, which is either 12 or 24 months. For a 1-year proposed project, the project period would start September 30, 2023, and end September

29, 2024. For a 2-year proposed project, the project period would start September 30, 2023, and end September 29, 2025.

Scholar: The doctoral-level graduate student who has designed and will execute the proposed dissertation project.

E. Questions Regarding Applications

For questions regarding this funding opportunity and/or the application process, please call 1-877-350-5913, or direct inquiries via email to OPRE Head Start Dissertation Grant Review at HSScholarsGrants@icf.com. Please note that no pre-application assistance can be given other than quoted information stated in this NOFO.

F. Transferability

The merit of the application and the award are associated with the support of a single graduate student, who is specified in the application. Awards may not be transferred to support any other graduate student.

Grant awards are not transferable to another organization or institution without prior written approval from ACF. In addition, grant funds may not be used to support project activities outside the scope of the proposal for the awarded project without prior written approval by ACF.

G. Sharing of Awards

The awards are for support of an individual graduate student researcher. Awards cannot be divided among two or more students (i.e., no co-investigators).

H. Indirect Costs

If the applicant institution voluntarily relinquishes their indirect costs, or chooses to apply off-campus research rates, an authorized representative of the institution must submit a written acknowledgment that the indirect costs are being relinquished, or a lower rate is being used. This voluntary decision to relinquish indirect costs, or to apply off-campus research rates, will not impact eligibility to submit an application and will not be a factor during objective review.

II. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:

G (Grant)

Estimated Total Funding:

\$150,000

Expected Number of Awards:

6

Award Ceiling:

\$25,000

Per Budget Period

Award Floor:

\$20,000

Per Budget Period

Average Projected Award Amount:

\$25,000

Per Budget Period

Anticipated Project Start Date:

09/30/2023

Length of Project Periods:

12-month project period and budget period

24-month project period with two 12-month budget periods

Additional Information on Project Periods and Explanation of 'Other'

As appropriate to the study design, please select a 12 month or 24 month project period.

Additional Information on Awards:

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

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

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

Project Periods and Non-Competitive Continuation Awards

Applicants conducting high-quality research, including research that involves primary data collection or secondary data analysis, using various quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies and designs, may apply for either a 12-month project period (with one budget period) or a 24-month project period (with two 12-month budget periods). Initial awards will be made for the first 12-month budget period. Applicants proposing a 12-month project period will be awarded up to \$25,000 for the 12-month budget period. Applicants proposing 24-month project periods will be awarded up to \$25,000 for the first 12-month budget period and up to \$25,000 for the second 12-month budget period, for a total not exceeding \$50,000 for the entire 24-month project period. ***The 12-month or 24-month project period should be noted in Item 17 on the Standard Form SF-424, and the need for a 12-month or 24-month project period must be identified in the project narrative, budget, and budget justification.***

For 24-month projects, non-competing continuation awards for the second 12-month budget period will be required and subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress by the grant recipient, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the federal government. Satisfactory project performance and progress is judged, in part, on information

provided in your semi-annual progress reports. This includes, but is not limited to, adhering to the timeline for when you plan to complete the future activities (aligned with the written description of planned activities), maintaining the research quality and methods originally proposed, evidence of collaborative partnership activities, and providing a detailed description of any changes in the activities and/or timeline from what was originally proposed. ***During the first budget period, applicants proposing 24-month projects will receive instructions on how to submit non-competing continuation applications to request funds for the second budget period.*** A second-year budget period will not be granted if the student has graduated by the end of the first-year budget period.

Indirect Costs

Indirect Costs are included in the Award Ceiling and are taken into consideration under the Award Ceiling disqualification factor.

III. Eligibility Information

III.1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are public, private, and state controlled institutions of higher education; state, county, city or township, and special district governments; independent school districts; non-profit organizations; for-profit organizations; small businesses; Native American tribal governments and organizations; and public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities.

The application must include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal by the application due date identified in this NOFO.

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

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible to receive awards under this funding opportunity. Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at and, subject to the protections and requirements of 45 CFR Part 87 and 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*, ACF will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, affiliation, or exercise.

Reference to Legal Status

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

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement:

No

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

For awards that require matching by statute, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards, even if the projected commitment

exceeds the amount required by the statutory match. **A recipient's failure to provide the statutorily required matching amount may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

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

III.3. Other

Approved Dissertation Proposal Disqualification Factor: The application must include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal by the application due date identified in this NOFO. Please refer to *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation* for further details and guidance. **If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this NOFO.**

Application Disqualification Factors

Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not eligible and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Award Ceiling Disqualification

Applications that request an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period or per project period ("per project period" refers only to fully funded awards), as stated in *Section II. Federal Award Information*, will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. This disqualification applies only to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the first 12-month budget period for projects with multiple budget periods. If the project and budget period are the same, the disqualification applies to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the project period.

Required Electronic Application Submission

ACF requires electronic submission of applications at Grants.gov. **Paper applications received from applicants that have not been approved for an exemption from required electronic submission will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding**

opportunity.

Applicants that do not have an internet connection or sufficient computing capacity to upload large documents to the internet may contact ACF for an exemption that will allow the applicant to submit applications in paper format. Information and the requirements for requesting an exemption from required electronic application submission are found in "[ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Electronic Application Submission.](#)"

Missing the Application Deadline (Late Applications)

The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. Electronic applications submitted to Grants.gov after 11:59 pm ET on the due date, as indicated by a dated and time-stamped email from Grants.gov, will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. That is, applications submitted to Grants.gov, on or after 12:00 am ET on the day after the due date will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

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

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

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

Notification of Application Disqualification

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Head Start Dissertation Grant Review
c/o ICF International

1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston
VA
20190
877-350-5913
703-934-3740
HSScholarsGrants@icf.com

Application Packages

Electronic Application Submission:

The electronic application submission package is available in the NOFO's listing at Grants.gov.

Applications in Paper Format:

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

Federal Relay Service:

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

IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

FORMATTING APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS

Each applicant applying electronically via Grants.gov is required to upload only two electronic files, excluding SFs and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-approved forms. No more than two files will be accepted for the review, and additional files will be removed. SFs and OMB-approved forms will not be considered additional files.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:

Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)

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

Point of Contact

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

Application Checklist

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

Accepted Font Style

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

English Language

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

Page Limitations

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

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

Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements

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

Adherence to NOFO Formatting, Font, and Page Limitation Requirements

Applications that fail to adhere to ACF's NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements will be adjusted by the removal of page(s) from the application. Pages will be removed before the objective review and will not be made available to reviewers.

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

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

NOTE: Applicants failing to adhere to ACF's NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements will receive a letter from ACF notifying them that their application was amended.

The letter will be sent after awards have been issued and will specify the reason(s) for removal of page(s).

Corrections/Updates to Submitted Applications

When applicants make revisions to a previously submitted application, ACF will accept only the last on-time application for pre-review under the Application Disqualification Factors. The Application Disqualification Factors determine the application's acceptance for competitive review. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors* and *Section IV.2. Application Submission Options*.

Copies Required

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

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

Signatures

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

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

Accepted Application Format

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

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

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

PAGE LIMITATIONS AND CONTENT FOR ALL SUBMISSION FORMATS:

Each application may include only one proposed project, submitted in two files: The Project Description File (File 1) and the Appendices File (File 2).

Page Limits. The length of the *entire* application must be limited to 100 pages. This page limit applies to the combined length of the Project Description File and the Appendices File. The recommended page limit for each file is 50 pages. Pages submitted beyond the first 100 pages in the application will be removed prior to panel review. The required Standard Forms (SF),

assurances, and certifications are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices Files, and are not included in the 100-page limit.

Organization of Files. Pages in the Project Description File must be numbered, beginning with the Table of Contents. Throughout both files, applicants are strongly encouraged to use headings and subheadings that correspond to the required application sections (listed below and in *Section IV.2. The Project Description* and *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*). Additional headers and subheaders may be used to organize the content of each section. Clear headings must be used to ease reviewers' identification of information relevant to the application review criteria.

Tables and Figures. Applications may include tables and/or figures as needed to supplement, but not replace, the narrative components of their applications. Tables and figures count in the 100-page limit.

Style Guideline. The proposal and tables/figures must be consistent with the citation format and style guidelines of the current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The research must comply with the "Ethical Standards" detailed in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2002).

The **Project Description File** must be carefully developed in accordance with ACF's research goals and agenda as described in *Section I. Program Description* and incorporate information related to the criteria that will be used to evaluate the application, as described in *Section V.1. Criteria*. We suggest organizing the Project Description File according to the sections presented below. See *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Approach* for additional instructions for preparing each section.

The **Project Description File** must include:

1. Table of Contents (includes a list of all pieces of the application being submitted across both files with corresponding page numbers)
2. Project Summary (one page maximum)
3. Approach
 - a. Background, Significance, and Objectives
 - b. Research Design and Methodology
 - c. Collaborative Partner Plan
 - d. Dissemination Plan
 - e. Management Plan
 - f. References
4. Budget and Budget Justification

The **Appendices File** must include the following components:

For items 1 through 9, see *Section IV.2. The Project Description* for additional guidance.

1. Letter of Support from:
 - a. PI/Faculty Mentor
 - b. Collaborative Partners
 - c. Additional Letters of Support if Applicable
2. Curriculum Vitae for:

- a. PI/Faculty Mentor
- b. Scholar

3. Documentation of Approved Dissertation Proposal (see *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*)
4. Proof of Non-profit or For-profit Status, if applicable (see *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*)
5. Organizational Capacity
6. Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities
7. Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
8. Third-Party Agreements

ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants are required to submit their applications electronically unless they have received an exemption that will allow submission in paper format. See *Section IV.2. Application Submission Options* for information about requesting an exemption.

Electronic applications will only be accepted via Grants.gov. **ACF will not accept applications submitted via email or via facsimile.**

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

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

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

Adherence to the Two-File Requirement

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

Application Upload Requirements

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

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

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

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

Required SFs and OMB-approved Forms

SFs and OMB-approved forms are uploaded separately at Grants.gov. These forms are submitted separately from the Project Description and Appendices files. See *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* for the listing of required SFs, OMB-approved forms, and required assurances and certifications.

Naming Application Submission Files

Carefully observe the file naming conventions required by Grants.gov. Limit file names to 50 characters (characters and spaces). Please also see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters.html>.

Use only file formats supported by ACF

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

ACF supports the following file formats:

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

Do Not Encrypt or Password-Protect the Electronic Application Files

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

incomplete application.

FORMATTING FOR PAPER APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS:

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

Format Requirements for Paper Applications

All copies of mailed or hand-delivered paper applications must be submitted in a single package. If an applicant is submitting multiple applications under a single NOFO, or multiple applications under separate NOFOs, each application submission must be packaged separately. The package(s) must be clearly labeled with the NOFO title and Funding Opportunity Number.

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

Applicants are advised that the copies of the application submitted, not the original, will be reproduced by the federal government for review. **All application materials must be one-sided for duplication purposes. All pages in the application submission must be sequentially numbered.**

Addresses for Submission of Paper Applications

See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* for addresses for paper format application submissions.

Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

Applicants seeking an award under this funding opportunity must submit the listed SFs, assurances, and certifications with the application. All required SFs, assurances, and certifications are available in the Application Package posted for this NOFO at Grants.gov.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)	Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the <i>Overview and Section IV.4. Submission Dates</i>	Form is available at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html . General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/ . Applicants may also contact OHRP by email

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	<p><i>and Times.</i> If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</p>	<p>(OHRP@HHS.gov) or by phone (240-453-6900).</p>
<p>SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance</p>	<p>Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.</p>	<p>Required for all applications.</p>
<p>Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.</p>	<p>Required of all applicants.</p> <p>Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and project award period.</p> <p>Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: http://www.sam.gov.</p>	<p>See <i>Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)</i> for more information.</p>
<p>SF-424 Key Contact Form</p>	<p>Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.</p>	<p>Required for all applications.</p>
<p>Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)</p>	<p>Submission required of all applicants with the application package. If it is not submitted with the application package, it must be</p>	<p>Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.</p>

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	submitted prior to the award of a grant.	
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non- Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non- Construction Programs	<p>Submission is required for all applicants when applying for a non-construction project. SFs must be used. Forms must be submitted by the application due date.</p> <p>By signing and submitting the SF-424B, applicants are making the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination.</p>	Required for all applications when applying for a non-construction project.
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.	If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
		submit the SF-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

Additional Required Assurances and Certifications

Mandatory Grant Disclosure

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

Disclosures must be sent in writing to:

The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Grants Management, ATTN: Grants Management Specialist, 330 C Street, SW., Switzer Building, Corridor 3200, Washington, DC 20201

And to:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, ATTN: Mandatory Grant Disclosures, Intake Coordinator, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Cohen Building, Room 5527, Washington, DC 20201

Fax: (202) 205-0604 (Include “Mandatory Grant Disclosures” in subject line) or

Email: grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov

SF-424 Key Contact Form:

Use this form to provide contact information for the PI/Faculty Mentor, Student, and the AOR.

Non-Federal Reviewers

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

The Project Description

The Project Description Overview

General Expectations and Instructions

The Project Description provides the information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for financial assistance. It must address all activities for which federal funds are being requested and all application requirements as stated

in this section. The Project Description must explain how the project will meet the purpose of the NOFO, as described in *Section I. Program Description*. As a reminder, reviewers will be evaluating this section in accordance with *Section V.1. Criteria*.

The Project Description must be clear, concise, and complete. ACF is particularly interested in Project Descriptions that convey strategies for achieving intended performance. Project Descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance and measurable outcomes, not length.

Cross-referencing should be used rather than repetition. Supporting documents designated as required must be included in the Appendix of the application.

Letter of Intent

Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify ACF of their intention to submit an application under this funding opportunity. Please submit a letter of intent by the deadline date listed in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. The letter of intent should include the following information: number and title of this funding opportunity; the name and address of the applicant organization; and the name, phone number, fax number and email address of a contact person.

Letter of intent information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications. **The letter of intent is optional**. Failure to submit a letter of intent **will not** impact eligibility to submit an application and **will not** disqualify an application from competitive review.

Submit the Letter of Intent to the following address:

Head Start Dissertation Grant Review Team

c/o ICF International

1902 Reston Metro Plaza

Reston, VA 20190

Email (Preferred): HSScholarsGrants@icf.com

Table of Contents

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

Project Summary

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

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

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

- Website Address, if applicable

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

Legal Status of Applicant Entity

Applicants must provide the following documentation:

Non-Profit Organizations

Proof of Non-Profit Status Options:

Option 1: 501(c)(3) and non-501(c)(3) non-profit organizations are eligible

Non-profit organizations applying for funding are required to submit proof of their non-profit status. Proof of non-profit status is any one of the following:

- A reference to the applicant organization's listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code.
- A copy of a currently valid IRS tax-exemption certificate.
- A statement from a state taxing body, state attorney general, or other appropriate state official certifying that the applicant organization has non-profit status and that none of the net earnings accrue to any private shareholders or individuals.
- A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status.
- Any of the items in the subparagraphs immediately above for a state or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

Unless directed otherwise, applicants must include proof of non-profit status in the *Appendices* file of the application submission.

For-Profits and Small Businesses

For-profit organizations (including small businesses) applying for funding must submit the following to provide proof of their legal status: Documentation establishing the power granted to the entity to enter into contractual relationships and/or accept awards (i.e., articles of incorporation, bylaws).

Small Businesses

Small businesses must submit a certification signed by the chief executive officer or designee that states that the entity qualifies as a small business under 13 CFR §§ 121.101- 121.201.

Additional Eligibility Documentation

Applicants must provide the additional, required documentation, or required credentials, to support eligibility for an award, as described in *Section III. Eligibility Information* of this funding opportunity.

As described in *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*, the following documents must be included in the **Appendices File**:

1. Letters of Support.

- a. Letter(s) of Support from PI/Faculty Mentor. As PI, the scholar's mentor must submit a letter of support stating that he/she approves the application and describing how he/she will regularly monitor the scholar's work. In addition, the letter must verify: (a) the scholar's status in the doctoral program, (b) that the grant will be used to fund the scholar's original dissertation research, and (c) that the scholar is within 2 years or less of completing his/her dissertation.
- b. Letter(s) of Support from the Collaborative Partner(s). The graduate student must have an established collaborative partnership with a Head Start/EHS program(s). This partnership must be evidenced by a Letter of Support from the partnering Head Start/EHS program(s) that documents: (a) their support of the proposed research, (b) their anticipated role in the project moving forward, and (c) how the proposed research will be informative to them. If the student proposes working with multiple Head Start/EHS programs, they must include a letter from each program to provide evidence of their support of the project. See *Section I.B. Goals and Requirements of the Head Start Dissertation Grants* and *Section IV.2. The Project Description* for additional details on expectations for collaborative partnerships.
- c. Additional Letters of Support, if applicable. If the primary faculty mentor does not have the necessary expertise to support and inform the proposed work or if the graduate student would like additional guidance from an expert, the graduate student may engage additional research advisors to contribute to supporting the completion of the proposed project. All proposed research advisors, mentors, or partners should supply a letter of support indicating their intention to participate and their responsibilities on the proposed project.

2. Curriculum Vitae.

1.

- a. Curriculum Vitae for PI/Faculty Mentor. The scholar's mentor must submit a curriculum vitae documenting that he/she has a Ph.D. or equivalent; conducts research as a primary professional responsibility; has published or has been accepted for publication in major peer-reviewed research journals as a first or second author; and has managed projects of similar content and scope, including experience working with Head Start and/or EHS programs and populations and/or, if applicable, culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations as indicated in his/her curriculum vitae.
- b. Curriculum Vitae for Scholar. The scholar must submit a current curriculum vitae that demonstrates that they have the relevant background, experience, and training to carry out the proposed activities.

3. Documentation of Approved Dissertation Proposal.

ACF must receive sufficient evidence of an approved dissertation proposal at the time of application deadline identified in this NOFO. **If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.** Sufficient evidence of an approved

dissertation proposal includes a written confirmation signed by committee member (s) or another departmental administrator attesting to the fact that the dissertation proposal has been officially approved by the university/department (or equivalent). Alternatively, a form or letter from the mentor or department lead describing completion of other processes that are equivalent to establishing this pre-doctoral status would suffice. This documentation must be submitted with the application by the application deadline identified on this NOFO.

Approach

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

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

A. Background, Significance, and Objectives. Applications must include a review of relevant literature, an outline and justification of the objective(s) of the proposed project, and a demonstration of the overall significance of the proposal to HS/EHS research, programs, and policies. Applications must incorporate the following components:

1. **Literature review.** Applications must include a review of relevant literature that identifies gaps in current knowledge and justifies the proposed study.
2. **Theoretical framework.** The application must present the underlying theoretical framework relevant to the type of study or research design.
3. **Research questions and hypotheses.** The application must identify the key research questions and related hypotheses as applicable to the research designed and proposed study questions.
4. **Significance and implications.** Applications must demonstrate how the study will address issues of significance to Head Start/EHS, or other early care and education programs and policies, as well as how it will address key gaps in the field of early care and education. To this end, applications must describe:
 - a. How the proposed project will build upon existing knowledge and contribute to our understanding of current and/or future Head Start /EHS programs/policies or populations served;
 - b. How the proposed project relates to Head Start /EHS program goals and addresses important issues in the Head Start /EHS and early care and education field (see *Section I.C. Priority Topics for this Opportunity* for priority topics.);
 - c. The proposed project's significance to policymakers, program administrators, and/or practitioners in early care and education settings; and
 - d. How the expected results apply to the populations/communities involved in the proposed project.
 - e. How the proposed project will incorporate an equity lens or consider equity in the relevant components of the project, such as the proposed research questions, design, analysis and interpretation and approach. If the proposed project is not expected to address equity, provide a justification for why. For example, discuss why it is not appropriate or feasible for the planned research questions, data sources, or methods to incorporate an equity and lens.

B. Research Design and Methodology. Applications may propose new data collection, analysis of existing secondary data, or a combination of both. The proposed research approach must demonstrate a study design, methods, and procedures that are appropriate for addressing the goals of the project. The proposed approach should address the objectives and research questions. For all research designs and methodologies, the application must describe the following:

1. **Constructs.** Identify and define the key constructs.
2. **Measures.** Describe how the key constructs will be (or were) measured, including psychometric properties of all instruments, as applicable. If secondary analysis is proposed, in addition to the information above, the plan must identify the variables or data elements to be used.
3. **Sample.** Describe a sampling plan that defines the study population, describes the expected sample, and details how the sample will be (or was) chosen and recruited. The sampling plan must consider demographic, cultural, or contextual factors that would be relevant to the research questions and/or the population of interest.
4. **Data Collection.** Describe the proposed data collection procedure. When possible, applicants should consider pursuing data collection across contexts, including child care, pre-k, home-visiting programs, Head Start /EHS, and/or others. The approach must include how the scholar will gain access to the necessary organizations, participants, and/or data sources. If secondary analysis is proposed, the plan must describe how the original data were collected and how the researcher will gain access to the data.
5. **Data Analysis Plan.** Describe the proposed analytical approaches and statistical techniques. The data analytic plan must describe the results of power analyses when appropriate. Citations justifying anticipated effect sizes are encouraged.
6. **Human Subjects and Data Protection.** Describe the procedures for ensuring adequate protection of human subjects, including consent procedures and a plan to protect confidentiality and security of all data. These procedures must be aligned with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2002). The presence of oversight must be confirmed by the Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance Identification/Institutional Review Board Certification/Declaration of Exemption form.
7. **Sensitivity.** Across methods, analyses, and research translation and dissemination plans, demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural, technical, logistical, and ethical issues of working in a community setting; working in partnership with Head Start /EHS program staff and/or families and children; and working with a culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse population and/or working with data regarding those populations and settings. If investigating demographic differences, examine how linguistic, ethnic, and racial categories may intersect with sociocultural dynamics.
8. **Scholarly Independence.** Provide evidence that the proposed dissertation research project is either an independent study designed and conducted by the student or a well-defined portion of a larger study being conducted by the PI/primary Faculty Mentor or another faculty member holding a senior research position. If the proposed project is part of a larger study designed by others, the application must clearly delineate the research questions and each feature of the Research Design and Methodology that will be carried out by the scholar and how they are distinguished from the larger research project.

9. **Potential Challenges.** Describe any potential challenges, such as limitations of the proposed sample, data sources, and/or measures, as well as how these challenges might be addressed. Any potential challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic must be clearly outlined and addressed in the proposal. If the project will not be impacted by COVID-19 challenges, this also should be specified in the proposal.

C. Collaborative Partner Plan. The application must demonstrate an established collaborative partnership with a Head Start/EHS program(s). All applicants are required to have a collaborative partnership with a Head Start/EHS program, regardless of whether the project proposes new data collection or secondary data analysis. The collaboration plan may also include details on collaboration with engaged community members (e.g. staff and families). The application must outline how the applicant plans to consult and/or collaborate with their partners throughout the course of the project to ensure that: (1) the project is relevant to the Head Start /EHS program and/or the ECE field and the populations served; (2) the collaboration benefits both the proposed work and the collaborative partners; and (3) the proposed collaboration seems viable and sustainable for the course of the project.

At a minimum, applicants must detail how their collaborative partners were engaged or consulted in the development and refinement of the research questions and how they will be involved during the interpretation and dissemination of findings. Additionally, applicants must be thoughtful about the best times and strategies for involving their partners, taking into consideration their research questions and design, the nature/context of their partnership, and when consultation with their partners would inform the quality or reach of the proposed work.

D. Dissemination Plan. The application must articulate how the project's findings will be disseminated to a wide audience (e.g., a research audience, policymakers, practitioners, and collaborative partners) using research, practice, and policy-oriented products and dissemination channels. In addition to traditional research products and dissemination channels (e.g., conference presentations, journal publications), the dissemination plan must include the development of products (e.g., presentations, research briefs, practitioner-focused articles) tailored to policymakers and/or practitioners (e.g., program administrators, local program directors, teachers, staff). Dissemination products must be developed in collaboration with partners. Scholars are required to attend two conferences and the annual Early Care and Education Scholars Grant Recipient Meeting each year. The dissemination plan must outline the conferences and meetings where the scholar plans to disseminate findings. The applicant should include their plan for consulting with the Federal Program Officer and the Child and Family Data Archive early within the project's period of performance to assess their projects and review considerations for data archiving (see

<https://www.childandfamilydataarchive.org/cfda/pages/cfda/share.html> for information about data archiving). Please refer to the Value-Added Research Dissemination Framework for additional guidance: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/valueadded.pdf>

E. Management Plan. The application must outline a management plan that describes a plan of action for how the proposed project will be carried out. This section must describe how the faculty mentor, scholar, and any other research advisors will communicate and maintain quality control over the implementation and ongoing operations for the study, in order to keep the project on track, ethically appropriate, and within budget. The plan must clearly define each member of the team and their role in the proposed project. The plan must outline how the faculty mentor will provide guidance and mentor the scholar, including information related to how often mentoring meetings will occur during different phases of the project and strategies for how the

mentor will support consultation/collaboration with collaborative partner(s). If the scholar is engaging additional research advisors, these individuals and their role in contributing to and managing the project must be detailed and evidenced by letters of support. Students whose work involves secondary analysis of large data sets are encouraged to confer with one or more senior investigators on the original project, if possible. A detailed monthly timeline must also be included, outlining milestones for completion of the various project tasks in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. The timeline must include when the expected completion of the research project will occur, as well as when the findings will be disseminated to a wider audience. The timeline may be presented in a Gantt Chart, if appropriate. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

F. References. Applications must include a list of references for all sources that are cited within the application. References must be formatted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the current version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Organizational Capacity

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

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

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities

Recipients are required to ensure proper oversight in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D.

These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

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

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

that will be responsible for maintaining oversight of program activities staff, and, if applicable, partner(s) and/or subrecipient(s).

Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information

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

Third-Party Agreements

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

Letters of Support

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

The Project Budget and Budget Justification

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

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

Special Note: *The Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2022 and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to*

ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this funding opportunity may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. For the Executive Level II salary, please see "Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables" under <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>. The salary limitation reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits, indirect costs and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

Provide a budget using the SF-424A and/or SF-424C, as applicable, for each year of the proposed project.

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

The following costs must be included in the budget and budget justification:

1. Expenses directly related to the student's dissertation research, which may include personnel costs/salary of the student, travel of the student, and other directly related expenses, such as the costs of data collection and incentive payments to participants. The budget may not include funds for activities that have already been completed or the salary for the student's faculty mentor.
2. Expenses related to travel (e.g., transportation, lodging, subsistence) for the student to attend the required meetings and conferences outlined in *Section I.B. Goals and Requirements of the Head Start Dissertation Grants*.
3. If necessary, expenses (e.g., transportation, lodging, subsistence) to enable the faculty mentor to participate in the required meetings in Washington, DC, must be included.

Both federal and non-federal resources (when required) must be detailed and justified in the budget and budget narrative justification. "Federal resources" refers only to the ACF grant funds for which you are applying. "Non-federal resources" are all other non-ACF 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 must be in a narrative form and must explain each amount presented in the table columns. Each amount must be linked to proposed activities in the project narrative

General

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

Personnel

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

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

Fringe Benefits

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

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

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

Travel

Description: Costs of project-related travel (i.e., transportation, lodging, subsistence) by employees of the applicant organization who are in travel status on official business. Travel by non-employees such as consultants, contractors or subrecipients should be included under the Contractual line item. Local travel for employees in non-travel status should be listed on the Other line. Travel costs should be developed in accordance with the applicant's travel policies and 45 CFR § 75.474.

Justification: For each trip show: the total number of travelers; travel destination; duration of trip; per diem; mileage allowances, if privately owned vehicles will be used to travel out of town; and other transportation costs and subsistence allowances. If appropriate for this project, travel costs for key project staff to attend ACF-sponsored workshops/conferences/recipient orientations should be detailed in the budget justification.

Equipment

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

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

Supplies

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

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

Contractual

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

Justification: Demonstrate that all procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open, and free competition. Applicants must justify any anticipated procurement action that is expected to be awarded without competition and exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold stated in 48 CFR § 2.101(b). Recipients may be required to make pre-award review and procurement documents, such as requests for proposals or invitations for bids, independent cost estimates, etc., available to ACF.

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

Other

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

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

Indirect Charges

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

1. The applicant currently has an indirect cost rate approved by HHS or another cognizant federal agency.

Justification: An applicant must enclose a copy of the current approved rate agreement. If the applicant is requesting a rate that is less than what is allowed under the program, the authorized representative of the applicant organization must submit a signed acknowledgement that the applicant is accepting a lower rate than allowed. Choosing to charge a lower rate will not be considered during the objective review or award selection process.

2. Per 45 CFR § 75.414(f) Indirect (F&A) costs, "any non-Federal entity [i.e., applicant] that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, ... may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described in Section 75.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as the non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time."

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

Commitment of Non-Federal Resources

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Disclaimer

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, the public reporting burden for the Project Description is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. The Project Description information collection is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires 03/31/2025. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Application Submission Options

Electronic Submission via Grants.gov

This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for ACF program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

Electronic Delivery

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

How to Register and Apply through Grants.gov

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

Organizations must have an active System for Award (SAM) registration which provides a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and Grants.gov account to apply for grants.

Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but SAM registration may take several weeks. Therefore, an organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entities ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions

here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

Register with SAM: All organizations (entities) applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer

to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Follow the on-screen instructions provided on the registration page.

Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account: A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant). If you work for or consult with multiple organizations, you can have a profile for each organization under one Grants.gov account. In such cases, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all your grant profiles. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the UEI for the organization in the UEI field. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html>

EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles: After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is then expected to log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been assigned the AOR role. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer

to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

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

How to Submit an Application to ACF via Grants.gov

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

For an overview of applying on Grants.gov using Workspaces, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

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

Complete a Workspace: Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the state of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

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

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

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

Complete SF-424 Fields First: These forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and SAM UEI. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

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

Track a Workspace: After successfully submitting a Workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

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

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

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

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

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

When ACF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submission, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by ACF.

Applicants with slow internet connections should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Therefore, applicants should allow enough time to prepare and submit the application before the package closing date.

Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received submission message in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role.

Issues with Federal Systems

For any systems issues experienced with Grants.gov or SAM.gov, please refer to ACF's "[Policy for Applicants Experiencing Federal Systems Issues](#)" document for complete guidance.

Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission

To request an exemption from required electronic submission, please refer to ACF's "[Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission](#)" document for complete guidance.

Paper Format Application Submission

An exemption is required for the submission of paper applications. See the preceding section on "[Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission](#)."

Applicants with exemptions that submit their applications in paper format, by mail or delivery, must submit one original and two copies of the complete application with all attachments. The original and each of the two copies must include all required forms, certifications, assurances, and appendices, be signed by the AOR, and be unbound. The original copy of the application

must have original signature(s). See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* of this funding opportunity for address information for paper format application submissions. Applications submitted in paper format must be received by 4:30 pm ET on the due date.

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

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

All applicants must have a UEI and an active registration with SAM (<https://www.sam.gov>) prior to applying to a funding opportunity.

All applicants are required to maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If a grant is awarded, the SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award. Your SAM registration must be renewed every 365 days to keep it active.

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

This action should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in your inability to submit your application through Grants.gov or prevent the award of a grant. Applicants should maintain documentation (with dates) of their efforts to request a UEI, register for, or renew a registration, at SAM.

Please see the “Help” tab at <https://sam.gov/content/help> for more information and assistance with this process.

HHS requires all entities that plan to apply for, and ultimately receive, federal grant funds from any HHS Agency to:

- Be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application or plan;
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active award or an application or plan under consideration by an OPDIV;
- Provide its UEI in each application or plan it submits to the OPDIV; and
- Ensure any proposed subrecipient(s) have obtained and provided to the recipient their UEI(s) prior to making any subawards (**Note:** Subrecipients are not required to complete full SAM registration.).

ACF is prohibited from making an award until an applicant has complied with these requirements. At the time an award is ready to be made, if the intended recipient has not complied with these requirements, ACF:

- May determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award; and
- May use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

IV.4. Submission Dates and Times

Due Date for Letter of Intent

Due Date for Letter of Intent 04/18/2023

The LOI date will generate once the Synopsis is published if Days or a Date are entered.
05/18/2023

Due Dates for Applications

05/18/2023

Explanation of Due Dates

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

Electronic Applications

The deadline for submission of electronic applications via Grants.gov is 11:59 pm ET on the due date. Electronic applications submitted at 12:00 am ET on the day after the due date will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

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

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

Instructions for electronic submission via Grants.gov are available at:

www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html.

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

Mailed Paper Format Applications

The deadline for receipt of mailed, paper applications is 4:30 pm ET on the due date. Mailed paper applications received after the due date and deadline time will be considered late and will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity.

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

Hand-Delivered Paper Format Applications

Hand-delivered applications must be received on, or before, the due date listed in the *Overview* and in this section. These applications must be delivered between the hours of 8:00 am ET and 4:30 pm ET Monday through Friday (excluding federal holidays).

Applications should be delivered to the address provided in *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements*.

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

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

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

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

Emergency Extensions

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

Acknowledgement of Received Application

Acknowledgement from Grants.gov

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

Applicants will also receive an email acknowledging that the received application is in the **Grants.gov validation process**, after which a third email is sent with the information that the submitted application package has passed, or failed, the series of checks and validations.

Applications that are submitted on time that fail the validation check will not be transmitted to ACF and will not be acknowledged by ACF.

Acknowledgement from ACF of an electronic application's submission:

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

Acknowledgement from ACF of receipt of a paper format application:

ACF will not provide acknowledgement of receipt of hard copy application packages submitted via mail or courier services.

IV.5. Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," or 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities." No action is required of applicants under this funding opportunity with regard to E.O. 12372.

IV.6. Funding Restrictions

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

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

Pre-award costs are not allowable.

Construction is not an allowable activity or expenditure under this award.

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

Major renovation is not an allowable activity or expenditure under this grant program.

IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

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

Submission by Mail

Bridget
Shea Westfall
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Grants Management
330 C. Street SW.
Washington
DC
20024

Hand Delivery

Same as Above

Electronic Submission

See *Section IV.2.* for application requirements and for guidance when submitting applications electronically via Grants.gov.

For all submissions, see *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

V. Application Review Information

V.1. Criteria

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

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

Application components must be organized such that a reviewer will be able to follow a seamless and logical flow of information (i.e., from a broad overview of the project to more detailed information about how it will be conducted). In addition, it is recommended that the application be carefully labeled to ease reviewers' identification of information relevant to the review criteria.

APPROACH, BACKGROUND, SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES

Maximum Points: 25

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the background section is clearly written and logically organized.
2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application contains a *current and comprehensive review of the relevant literature*. The application identifies gaps in existing knowledge and strongly motivates the need and objectives for the study.
3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application includes an *appropriate theoretical framework* that is consistent with the reviewed literature, the project's research questions, and any proposed hypotheses.
4. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application outlines clear and specific research questions and, if appropriate, hypotheses that are reasonable and well-justified by the

study's theoretical framework, extant evidence, and research gaps.

5. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly addresses issues of significance relevant to: (1) the broader field of early care and education, and (2) to current and/or future Head Start and/or EHS populations served, programs, and/or policies.

6. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application includes reference citations that are complete and consistent with the most current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

7. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application provides a thoughtful discussion of how the proposed project incorporates an equity lens (i.e., identifying disparities and potential impacts on historically or institutionally under-served and marginalized individuals and groups, identifying and barriers to services or supports) or why this is not appropriate for the proposed research topic.

APPROACH, RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Maximum Points: 35

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly defines and appropriately links the research questions, design/methods, sample, key constructs, (or phenomena of interest for qualitative research), measures/data sources, and analytic approach.

2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the proposed research approach employs technically sound and rigorous design, methods, and procedures that are appropriate for thoroughly addressing the goals of the project. Research design is appropriate to the state of the field for the given research question and the state of knowledge and understanding of the constructs. If secondary analyses is to be used, the original research design effectively addresses the identified research questions.

3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the proposed research approach is appropriate and sufficient to address the proposed objectives and research questions.

4. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application demonstrates that the measures and/or qualitative data collection tools are appropriate for the proposed constructs and/or phenomena of interest, research questions, and the population to be studied. If secondary data analysis is proposed, the design, variables, and data elements to be used are clearly identified and validly represent the constructs proposed.

a. For quantitative methods, the application describes the psychometric properties (e.g. validity, reliability) of all measures, both for primary and secondary data analyses, or a sufficient plan to conduct psychometric analyses if not yet available.

b. For qualitative methods, the application describes how the data collection tools will be (or have been) developed, tested, and refined with sufficient detail about data collection procedures.

5. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application describes a feasible and appropriate sampling plan that clearly defines the study population, describes the expected sample, and details how the sample will be (or was) chosen and recruited. The sampling plan must consider demographic or contextual factors that would be relevant to the research questions and/or the population of interest.

6. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application thoroughly demonstrates an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural, technical, logistical, and ethical issues of working in a community setting; working in partnership with Head Start /EHS program staff

and/or families; and, if applicable, working with culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations.

a. If examining issues of demographic differences (i.e., language, ethnicity, race), the application goes beyond simply recording linguistic, ethnic, and racial categories to provide a more thorough examination of how these groupings intersect with important sociocultural dynamics such as social position, immigration status, family practices, or parental goals for socialization.

7. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly describes a feasible plan for data collection, including how the scholar will gain access to the necessary organizations, participants, and/or data sources needed for the project. Additionally, the application clearly demonstrates how the data collection approach will result in data that appropriately address the research questions.

a. If secondary analysis is proposed, the application thoroughly describes the original data source and collection, how the scholar will gain access to the original data files, and convincingly explains how data drawn with these methods is likely to provide answers to the proposed research questions.

8. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application confirms that the proposed project was developed and designed by the graduate student. If the proposed project is part of a larger study designed by others, the application clearly delineates the student's leading role in refining the research questions, methods, and analyses plan, and their planned leadership role in implementing the study. The application clearly explains how the proposed research project is a distinct delineated project within the larger research study.

9. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application adequately describes potential challenges, such as limitations with the proposed sample, data sources, and/or measures, as well as how these challenges might be addressed. If relevant, the application clearly outlines and addresses potential challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. If the project will not be impacted by COVID-19 challenges, this also should be specified.

10. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application contains a *comprehensive data analytic plan* that is well-described and is appropriate for each research question(s) under consideration, as well as for the types of data to be analyzed (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods). For quantitative methods, applicant will provide a power analyses or other justification to validate the sample size (i.e. sufficient to detect effects using the proposed analytic methods) for the planned analyses. For qualitative methods, the application identifies a minimum sampling size to sufficiently address the research question(s) (e.g., to identify clear themes, reach data saturation). For mixed methods, the application includes a clear and justified approach to integrating qualitative and quantitative data to address the research question(s).

11. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application provides adequate protection of human subjects, confidentiality of data and informed consent procedures, as defined by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2002) and confirms an Institutional Review Board through the Protection of Human Subjects: Assurance Identification/Institutional Review Board Certification/Declaration of Exemption form.

APPROACH, COLLABORATIVE PARTNER PLAN**Maximum Points: 10**

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application details a reasonable, well-justified, and thoughtful approach regarding when and how to engage collaborative partners (e.g., programs, leadership, teachers, and families) throughout the course of the project.

a. At a minimum, the application describes, in sufficient detail, how the applicant has consulted or collaborated with Head Start /EHS program(s) in the development and refinement of the research questions and will consult or collaborate with Head Start /EHS program(s) in the interpretation and dissemination of the findings.

b. The planned collaboration is sufficient to ensure that: (1) the project is relevant to the Head Start /EHS program and/or the ECE field and the populations served, and (2) the collaboration benefits both the proposed work and the collaborative partners.

c. The proposed collaboration seems viable and sustainable for the course of the project.

2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application includes a letter of support from the Head Start /EHS program(s) as evidence of a collaborative partnership.

APPROACH, DISSEMINATION PLAN**Maximum Points: 5**

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application describes a reasonable and appropriate plan for disseminating findings to a research audience. The proposed products and activities are appropriate for a research audience.

2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application describes a reasonable and appropriate plan for disseminating findings to policymakers, practitioners, collaborative partners (e.g., Head Start /EHS program(s)), and communities of interest.. The proposed products and activities are appropriately tailored for policy and practice audiences.

3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly outlines the conferences and meetings where the scholar plans to disseminate findings.

APPROACH, MANAGEMENT PLAN**Maximum Points: 5**

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application includes a sound management plan that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each team member, including the faculty mentor, the student, the collaborative partners, and any additional research advisors. The application fully describes how project tasks will be carried out and by whom. The application also presents clearly defined approaches for how the student and faculty mentor will work together to keep the project on track and within budget, ensure accurate and on-time reporting, and ensure quality end products.

2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly demonstrates how the faculty mentor will support the student across the different phases of the project, including a description of when and how often meetings between the mentor and student will occur, as well as a description of how the faculty mentor will support the student in working with the collaborative partner(s) and in completing the research.

3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application provides a clear and detailed timeline with benchmarks indicating when project activities will be conducted and completed and when the entire project is expected to be finished. The timeline includes feasible markers for developing drafts, reviewing and refining end products, and disseminating findings to relevant audiences.

APPROACH, ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, AND QUALIFICATIONS

Maximum Points: 10

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly demonstrates that the scholar:
 - a. possesses the relevant background, experience, and training to carry out the proposed activities; and
 - b. has completed graduate coursework and is at the dissertation level.
2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application clearly demonstrates that the faculty mentor:
 - a. possesses the research expertise, including relevant background, experience, and training on related research or similar projects necessary to supervise the study;
 - b. has earned a doctorate or equivalent in a relevant field, conducts research as a primary professional responsibility, and has first or second author peer-reviewed publications; and
 - c. demonstrates prior experience working with Head Start /EHS programs, and/or, if applicable, culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse populations. If the primary faculty mentor does not have the necessary expertise to support and inform this work, the application includes additional research advisors who have this expertise to contribute to supporting the proposed project.
3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application demonstrates that the applicant organization has a successful history of research and budget oversight, as well as a history of awarding advanced degrees.

BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Maximum Points: 10

1. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the application includes a detailed budget with itemized expenses for the project and a detailed narrative budget justification that clearly explains all assumptions and calculations.
2. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the proposed project costs (e.g., required personnel costs/salary, travel, and other directly related expenses) are reasonable and appropriate to support the proposed dissertation research. Proposed costs are appropriately allocated to accomplish the research objectives, design, and dissemination plan. All costs can be clearly linked to their respective proposed activities in the project narrative. Budgeted funds are justified according to the needs and timeframe for carrying out the proposed project.
3. Reviewers will consider the extent to which the budget includes adequate funds for the student and (if necessary) for his/her mentor to participate in the two required conferences and the grant recipient meeting, annually.

V.2. Review and Selection Process

No grant award will be made under this funding opportunity on the basis of an incomplete application. No grant award will be made to an applicant that does not have a UEI and an active SAM registration. See *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)*.

Initial ACF Screening

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

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

Objective Review and Results

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

Results of the competitive objective review are taken into consideration by ACF in the selection of projects for funding; however, objective review scores and rankings are not binding. Scores and rankings are only one element used in the award decision-making process. If identified in *Section I. Program Description*, ACF reserves the right to consider preferences to fund organizations serving emerging, unserved, or under-served populations, including those populations located in pockets of poverty. In addition, ACF reserves the right to evaluate applications in the larger context of the overall portfolio by considering geographic distribution of federal funds (e.g., ensuring coverage of states, counties, or service areas) in its pre-award decisions.

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

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

The competitive review will be conducted by panels of non-federal and federal expert reviewers knowledgeable in the areas of Head Start /EHS programmatic and policy issues, and early care and education research and evaluation. Reviewers will use the evaluation criteria listed in *Section V.1. Criteria* to review and score the application. OPRE will conduct an administrative review of the applications and results of the competitive review panels and will make recommendations for funding to the Director of OPRE, taking into account the goals of the Head Start Dissertation Grants as listed in *Section I. Program Description*. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration is responsible for the final selection. On the basis of the review of an application, ACF will: (a) approve the application for funding; (b) disapprove the application; or (c) approve the application but not fund it due to lack of funds or a need for further review.

Applications may be funded in whole or in part depending on: (1) the ranked order of applicants resulting from the competitive review; (2) the staff review and consultations; (3) the availability of funding; and (4) the best interests of the federal government.

Dissertation Proposal Approval Requirement

ACF must receive sufficient evidence of an approved dissertation proposal at the time of the application deadline identified in this NOFO. If the application does not include evidence of an approved dissertation proposal, the application will be disqualified from competitive review and funding under this funding opportunity. See Section IV.2. *Additional Eligibility Documentation*.

Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants

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

Non-Federal Reviewers Reference

Please refer to *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* of this funding opportunity for information on non-federal reviewers in the review process.

Approved but Unfunded Applications

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

V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

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

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

VI.1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a NoA that sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions of the grant, the effective date of the grant, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The NoA will be signed by the Grants Officer and transmitted via email or by GrantSolutions, or the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), whichever is relevant.

Following the finalization of funding decisions, organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified by letter signed by the cognizant Program Office head. Any other correspondence that announces to a Principal Investigator, or a Project Director, that an application was selected is not an authorization to begin performance.

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

Recipients may translate the Federal award and other documents into another language. In the event of inconsistency between any terms and conditions of the Federal award and any translation into another language, the English language meaning will control. Where a significant portion of the recipient's employees who are working on the Federal award are not fluent in English, the recipient must provide the Federal award in English and in the language(s) with which employees are more familiar.

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

Please review all HHS regulatory provisions for Termination at 2 CFR § 200.340.

HHS Grants Policy Statement

The HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS) is the Department of Health and Human Services' single policy guide for discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. ACF grant awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS GPS, which covers basic grants processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as well as important agency-specific requirements. The general terms and conditions in the HHS GPS will apply as indicated unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary that are specified in the NoA. The HHS GPS is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/discretionary-post-award-requirements#book_content_0.

Equal Treatment of Faith-Based Organizations

A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the federal government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom, nondiscrimination, and conscience protections in federal law, including the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*), the Coats-Snowe Amendment (42 U.S.C. 238n), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e-1(a) and 2000e-2(e)), Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12113(d)(2), section 1553 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18113), the Weldon Amendment (e.g., Further Consolidated

Appropriations Act, 2020, Public Law 116–94, 133 Stat. 2534, 2607, div. A, sec. 507(d) (Dec. 20, 2019)), or any related or similar federal laws or regulations. Religious accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

Consistent with 45 CFR § 87.3(b), a faith-based organization that receives direct financial assistance from HHS may not engage in any explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization) as part of the programs or services funded with direct financial assistance from the HHS awarding agency. Such an organization, whether faith-based or not, also shall not, in providing services funded by HHS, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice, as provided in 45 CFR § 87.3(d).

Ownership of Results

Ownership of data, reports, proposals, and studies produced or developed under funding of this federal award are subject to section 649(f) of the Head Start Act, as amended by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 9844), which says, "The Secretary shall take necessary steps to ensure that all studies, reports, proposals, and data produced or developed with Federal funds under this subchapter shall become the property of the U.S."

VI.3. Reporting

Performance Progress Reports:

Semi-Annually

Reporting Requirements

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

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

Financial Reports:

Semi-Annually

VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s)

Program Office Contact

Wendy

DeCoursey

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Head Start Dissertation Grant Program

c/o ICF International

1902 Reston Metro Plaza

Reston

VA

20190

877-350-5913
(703) 934-3740
HSScholarsGrants@icf.com

Office of Grants Management Contact

Bridget
Shea Westfall
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Grants Management
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington
DC
20201
(202) 401-5542
bridget.sheawestfall@acf.hhs.gov

Federal Relay Service:

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

VIII. Other Information

Reference Websites

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) www.hhs.gov/.

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

ACF Funding Opportunities Forecasts and NOFOs www.grants.gov/.

ACF "How To Apply For A Grant" <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant>.

ACF Property Guidance <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/real-property-and-tangible-personal-property>

Grants.gov Accessibility Information www.grants.gov/web/grants/accessibility-compliance.html.

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

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

For further information about previous Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant recipients, please refer to <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-graduate-student-research-program>. For more information about OPRE, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>. For information about the OHS and the Head Start program, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>.

Application Checklist

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

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification / IRB Certification / Declaration of Exemption (Common Rule)	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> . See http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/forms/index.html for additional information. This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov	Submission of the required information and forms is due with the application package by the due date listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> . If the information is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> . This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Referenced in <i>Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)</i> in the funding opportunity. To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to http://www.sam.gov .	A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants. Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> . This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov .	Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications</i> .	Submission is due with the application package or prior to the award of a grant.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov .	
SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424B - Assurances - Non- Construction Programs	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i> These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section. They are required for applications that include only non-construction activities.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i> This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov .	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	"Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.</i> This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov .	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
Letter of Intent	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. Project Description.</i>	Submission is due by the Letter of Intent due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4.</i>
Table of Contents	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description.</i>	Submit with the application by the due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Proof of Non-Profit Status	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity.</i>	<p>Proof of non-profit status should be submitted with the application package by the application due date and time listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4.</i> of the NOFO.</p> <p>If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</p>
The Project Budget and Budget Justification	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification.</i>	<p>Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C.</p> <p>Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i></p>
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (IDR)	<p>Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification.</i></p> <p>The IDR must be submitted with the application package.</p>	<p>If the IDR is available by the application due date, it must be submitted with the application package.</p> <p>If it is not available by the application due date, listed in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i>, it may be submitted prior to the award of a grant.</p>
The Project Description	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description.</i>	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>
Eligibility Documentation by For-Profit Organizations	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity.</i>	Submission is required with the application by the Application Due Date in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.</i>

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Project Summary/Abstract	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> . The Project Summary/Abstract is limited to one single-spaced page.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and in <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .	Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Curricula Vitae for Student and Faculty Mentor	Referenced in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description</i> .	Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Documentation of Approved Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	Referenced in <i>IV.2. The Project Description</i> .	Submission due by due date found in <i>Section IV.2. The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation</i> .
Letter(s) of Support from the Collaborative Partner(s)	Referenced in <i>IV.2. The Project Description</i> .	Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .
Additional Letters of Support, if applicable	Referenced in <i>IV.2. The Project Description</i> .	Submission due by application due date found in the <i>Overview</i> and <i>Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times</i> .