

## COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

### Grant Guidelines and Instructions

#### Grant Purpose

Court Improvement Program (CIP) grants are federal funds awarded to each state's highest court by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to help states assess and evaluate foster care and adoption laws, and improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and youth who experience the child welfare system.

#### Grant Eligibility & Cost Share

State agencies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and local governments (including courts) are eligible to apply. A non-federal share is required for each CIP grant at the rate of 25 percent of the total budget (1/3 of the federal share). Additional information on cost share requirements can be found on pg. 6-7 of this document.

#### Grant Cycle

- The grant cycle is from October 1 to September 30 of any given year.
- New project grants are awarded from date of funding through September 30th of each year.

#### Required Grant Activity, Goals, & Deliverables

All activities must demonstrably promote safety, permanency or wellbeing for the child and family and must fit into one or more of four strategic categories – **Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and/or Data** – described in more detail below. Grantees will incorporate into their proposal a plan for collecting, analyzing, and reporting on outcomes of the project to the Commission at the conclusion of the grant period. Some activities fit in more than one category.

**Systems Improvement** - Execute innovative projects aimed at ensuring equity, fairness, and justice for children, youth, and families; promoting judicial leadership in courts and communities; and expanding court and child welfare system capacity to support continuous, systemic improvement.

**Legal Practice & Process** - Assist trial and appellate courts, judges, and legal advocates to ensure that children, youth, and families involved with child welfare experience a legal system in which they have access to justice and their rights are protected.

**Training** - Oversee and develop judicial and legal training efforts at all levels of practice that identify and promote best practices to improve outcomes and establish and maintain a well-informed judiciary and bar.

**Data** - Operationalize data-driven decision-making through continuous quality improvement and an analysis of publicly available child welfare and court data to identify legal processes and practices that produce desired outcomes, as well as which practices need improvement.

## **Required Grant Activity Components**

Grant recipients must incorporate continuous quality improvement methods (CQI) into all grant-funded activities. CQI is a process that seeks to establish whether activities undertaken to achieve particular goals produce the desired outcomes, and whether data support the outcomes. Another important part of CQI is sharing with others any resulting data and analysis and continually soliciting feedback. This assists CIP in moving forward to another stage of the project in a cyclical process of gathering data, evaluating it and trying new strategies. The CQI process can also reveal whether projects, as designed, will produce desired outcomes. Additional detail and questions on the CQI process can be found in Attachment A.

As part of the CQI process, all grant applicants are required to identify each of the following for each project:

- 1. Identified Need:** Describe the problem, issue, or need your program will address. Refer to the CQI/Change Management Questions (Attachment A).
- 2. Goals & Objectives of the Project:** Describe the program's objective(s) and how it/they contribute(s) to the overall goal of resolving the problem or issue. Objectives are specific, measurable actions that must be undertaken to achieve an overall goal. Goals should align with one of the four strategic categories for which your project will address.
- 3. Project Activity:** Please list all activities that you will undertake or perform in an attempt to fulfill the identified objective(s).
- 4. Outcome:** What changes do you expect to occur as a result of the activity/activities?
- 5. Data Collection:** Quality data collection is a requirement of the CQI process and award funding. What data will be collected and by whom?
- 6. Evaluation:** Please indicate how you might use the results to improve or modify the project.

## **General Grant Rules**

- a. Compliance with Laws** - The applicant shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, statutes, codes, ordinances, rules and regulations, and the orders and decrees of any courts or administrative bodies or tribunals in any matter affecting the performance of this program, including, without limitation, workers' compensation laws, minimum and maximum salary

and wage statutes and regulations, nondiscrimination laws and regulations, and licensing laws and regulations. When required, the applicant shall furnish CIP with satisfactory proof of its compliance.

- b. Ongoing and Meaningful Collaboration** – All CIP funded programs must include a process for on-going and meaningful collaboration with CIP and the other stakeholders who impact child protection courts. Applicants must avoid any risk of *ex parte* communications on particular matters before a court in implementing this requirement.
- c. Single Contract** – A partnership, multi-county region, or other conglomerate entity requesting funds must appoint one entity to be the administrator. If selected, CIP will only contract with one entity for the program. Only one county or agency may be designated as the administrative county in partnerships or regions.
- d. Disclosure** – Applicants must disclose if any members of the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (The Children’s Commission), a Children’s Commission Committee or Children’s Commission Collaborative Council member serves on a governing or advisory board or is retained for fee beyond reimbursement of actual expenses to participate in funded activities.
- e. Grant Officials** - Each grant must have the following designated to serve as grant officials:
  - i. Financial officer. This person must be the county auditor (or county treasurer if the county does not have a county auditor) or governmental, educational institution or non-profit organization’s fiscal officer.
  - ii. Authorized official. This person must be authorized to apply for, accept, decline, modify, or cancel the grant for the applicant. A county judge or a designee authorized by the governing body in its resolution may serve as the authorized official.Note: The financial officer may not serve as the authorized official.
- f. Maintain Official Contact Information** - Applicants and subgrantees must advise CIP of changes in the authorized official, program director or financial officer. This information will be used to provide notices for grant information. CIP will use e-mail whenever possible to notify grant recipients of required reports and funding opportunities.
- g. Equipment and Software Maintenance** - All equipment and software purchased with grant funds shall include at least three (3) years and no more than five (5) years of maintenance to ensure the equipment and software will operate as intended during and beyond the grant period.
- h. Inventory** – Property records must be maintained by applicants for any equipment and capital expenses incurred consistent with the applicants’ written property control policy and procedures. In the event an applicant does not have such property control measures then the equipment must be maintained in such a way to protect the asset from damage or loss in accordance with OMB circulars. If the court improvement program is discontinued prior to the expiration of the useful life then the applicant may continue to use the property to support similar programs or notify CIP to discuss procedures for return or transfer of the property. Subgrantees may choose useful life attribution for inventory items in accordance with OMB circulars.

- i. **Records Retention** – Grant recipients must maintain records related to the funded activity for at least *three years after the end of the grant period*. Records may be stored electronically.
- j. **Monitoring and Auditing** – Records must be made available to CIP or its designees upon request. CIP staff or their designees must have access to funded events or be allowed to conduct on-site inspections.
- k. **Professional and Contractual Services** - Any contract or agreement entered into by a subgrantee that obligates grant funds must be in writing and consistent with Texas contract law. Subgrantees must establish a contract administration system to regularly and consistently ensure that contract deliverables are being provided as specified in the contracts. A subgrantee's failure to monitor its contracts may result in disallowed costs and/or disallowed match.
- l. **Curriculum Approval** – Training events funded with CIP grants must be developed in consultation with the CIP staff and approved in advance of the event.
- m. **Grant Status** – Continued programs must be current on reporting and program requirements as of the grant review period. CIP will review status of continued programs and make recommendations to The Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families based on the status of the program.
- n. **Grant Management Standards** – All programs and funds awarded under CIP shall be managed in accordance with the Texas Uniform Grant Management Standards (UGMS), which can be linked to here: [www.governor.state.tx.us/files/state-grants/UGMS062004.doc](http://www.governor.state.tx.us/files/state-grants/UGMS062004.doc).
- o. **Collaboration** – Identify the persons or groups with whom you will collaborate as part of your project. Collaboration with partners may be informal or formalized with, for example, a memorandum of understanding.

## Review & Selection

- a. **Review criteria** – Commission staff will review each grant in relation to the Children’s Commission Strategic plan and/or the strategic plans submitted by the Supreme Court of Texas to ACF.
- b. **Past performance** – Children’s Commission Staff will review subgrantees performance, implementation, and evaluation of past grants.
- c. **Final Selection** – The Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families will make the final decision about which projects will receive CIP funding. The Children’s Commission staff may recommend to the Children’s Commission that a program not be funded.

## Financial Provisions

- a. **Funds Availability** - All commitments are subject to availability of funds.

- b. Fund Use** - Funds must be used to pay for the direct and/or administrative costs of providing court improvement projects consistent with the Children’s Commission Strategic plan and/or the strategic plans submitted by the Supreme Court of Texas to ACF.
- c. Cash or In-kind Match** – Applicants must indicate a cash or in-kind match from government, agency, or other non-federal funds of at least 25% of total project costs. The written proposal must include a plan for implementing the method of match. An applicant's use of match must comply with the same statutes, rules, regulations, and guidelines applicable to the use of CIP funded portion of a grant project. In accordance with these provisions, funds eligible to be used as non-Federal share, among other things:
- i. Must not be federal grant funds, unless specifically allowed by Federal statute;
  - ii. Must not be used to match any other Federal grant;
  - iii. Must be used for costs that are otherwise allowable (i.e. the non-Federal share, like the Federal share must also be used for the purposes described in Section 438 of the Act and this program instruction);
  - iv. May originate with a third party, public or non-public; and
  - v. May be in-kind contributions of services, equipment, or property.

Three examples of how to calculate cash match are:

- 100% of Total Project Costs minus (-) percent of match required equals (=) percent CIP will pay. (Example: \$1,000-\$250=\$750)
- Amount of CIP funds requested divided by percent CIP can pay = Total Project Cost. (Example: \$750÷75%=\$1,000)
- Total Project Cost multiplied by percent of match required = Total Match Required. (Example: \$1,000x25%=\$250)

- d. Budget – (Narrative required)** Applicants will complete the budget form. Budget narrative must clearly state the costs of executing the program. Budget categories are Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, and Other.
- i. Include all costs necessary to implement the proposed activity.
  - ii. The narrative must justify all budgeted expenses.
  - iii. The narrative must correspond to the activities sections.
  - iv. Identify in the narrative the start-up costs or non-reoccurring.
  - v. Indicate other sources of match and whether they will provide direct cash payments or in-kind contributions.
- e. Timeframe for Expenses** - No expenses are allowed outside of the period specified in the Statement of Grant Award.
- f. Program Related Costs for These Grants** - Only costs directly related to project are allowable. See OMB Circulars A-87 and A-110 for full details of allowable costs.
- g. Unallowable Costs** –Specifically, in accordance with OMB Circulars, UGMS and/or the grant rules the following conditions apply to these grant funds:
- i. General government costs are unallowable;
  - ii. Costs of law enforcement, prosecution, and incarceration are unallowable;
- and

iii. Replacing existing funding with grant funds is unallowable;  
(Note: See OMB Circulars A-87 and A-110 for full details of unallowable costs.)

- h. **Reallocation of Funds** - CIP permits up to 25% of funds to be reallocated within budget line-item categories without prior Commission approval however, all reallocations must be approved by the Children's Commission Grants Administrator. Please send all reallocation requests via email to the Grants Administrator at [Patrick.Passmore@txcourts.gov](mailto:Patrick.Passmore@txcourts.gov) for review and approval.
- i. **Unobligated Balances** - At the end of a budget period any unspent funds will be returned to the CIP. Fund carryover and no-cost extensions are not allowed.
- j. **Supplanting Prohibited** - Applicants may not reduce the amount of funds provided for courts because of funds provided by this grant. Supplanting is defined as the withdrawal of local, private, or other public funds for services that were available during previous years of funding for the same program purpose in the same manner.
- k. **Use of Program Income** - Applicants may use funds received through program income to fulfill the matching funds requirement, if applicable.
- l. **Awards** - Publishing this RFA does not obligate CIP to fund any programs.
- m. **Partial Funding** - CIP may recommend funding for all or any portion of a program submitted in the application.
- n. **Substitution** - CIP may recommend alternative funding sources, special conditions or alternative program elements in response to submitted applications.
- o. **Reporting Requirements** – Grantees are required to submit two formal reports during the grant period: an interim and a final program progress report.

The **interim progress** report is due at the six-month interval of the grant period. The deadline is prescribed in the Notice of Award under “Reporting Requirements.”

The **final progress** report is due at the completion of the grant period. The deadline is prescribed in the Notice of Award under “Reporting Requirements.” CIP will provide a template for both reports on its website at [www.texaschildrenscommission.gov](http://www.texaschildrenscommission.gov). CIP also requires that each grant recipient provide a copy of any independent or required audit completed by a sub-grantee to help ensure adequate accountability of organizations expending CIP funds. A copy of the audit must be submitted to CIP within 30 days after completion of the audit. Grantees should take note that failure to submit reports within the recommended timeframe may result in delay in final payments and hold on future funding. ***CIP reserves the right to require additional reports or submission of backup to CIP for auditing purposes at any time during the grant year.***

- p. **Future Funding on Continued Projects** – CIP can recommend funding for only the current grant year. Future funding will be based on the applicant submitting a new application to continue funding in subsequent years, submission of progress reports, a demonstration of successful progress made in implementing the program evidenced by a formal evaluation, and future availability of funds.

- q. Length of Project Grants** -A project grant may be funded for up to three fiscal years unless otherwise authorized by the Children’s Commission for purposes of project completion.

## Change Management Questions

CQI/CHANGE MANAGEMENT PHASE <i>(Questions to ask about the project during each phase)</i>	IMPORTANT MILESTONES FOR MOVING TO THE NEXT PHASE OF THE WORK
<b>Phase I: Identify and Assess Needs</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p><b>Identify a need to be addressed. <i>How do you know this is an issue in your state?</i></b>  <i>What do you know about the need? Who (e.g., stakeholders) identified this as a need? Population most affected? Scope of need (e.g., how widespread)? How long has this been a need? Is there data to support this? What outcome do you hope to change by addressing this need? Is the need at the system, policy, or practice level?</i></p> <p><b>Form teams to guide the change process. <i>Who are the stakeholders that should contribute to this discussion?</i></b>  <i>What is the goal the team will achieve? Purpose of the team? Single or multiple teams? What roles and expertise are required? Structure of the team? How will decisions be made? Logistics and communication?</i></p> <p><b>Gather data, explore the problem in depth, and identify who is most affected. <i>What have you learned (or what can you learn) by digging deeper into the issue?</i></b>  <i>What are the available data sources? How can these be used (e.g., data elements)? Quality/reliability of data? What story do the data tell? Characteristics of those most affected? Is more data needed? If so, how will you get it?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need is clearly defined and documented.</li> <li>• An initial goal or outcome has been identified.</li> <li>• A team has been established to guide the change and implementation process; decision-making protocols have been established.</li> <li>• There is sufficient data and information to understand the underlying nature of the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase II: Develop Theory of Change</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p><b>Develop a theory about the causes of the need and how to address them. The theory of change links outcomes and activities to explain HOW and WHY the desired change is expected to occur. <i>How will this program affect outcomes?</i></b>  <i>What are the possible causes of the problem? What data support this? Categorize and prioritize root causes (e.g., what are the most likely causes?). What are the constraints (e.g., resources)? Develop your theory of change. What are the potential short-term and long-term outcomes of this change? How will outcomes be tracked? Develop a logic model to summarize theory of change.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed and documented a theory about the causes of the need or opportunity, how to address them, and a pathway towards improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase III: Develop or Select Solutions</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p><b>Identify, research, and select best possible solutions that will address the need and reflect the theory of change. <i>What is the best way to address this need?</i></b>  <i>Is solution based on root cause? What does available research say about approaches to this need? What do the logic model and theory of change indicate is best way to address need? What resources are available to provide expertise? What research and literature is available on existing approach? Are there evidence-informed practices that can be applied? Feasibility of implementation? Cost-benefit?</i></p> <p><b>Adapt existing interventions or design new ones. <i>How will the program/practice be most effectively integrated into practice in your state?</i></b>  <i>Can the intervention be adapted or do you need to design a new intervention to meet your needs? Are stakeholders familiar with intervention? Is there agreement that this addresses theory of change? What do you know about how others have implemented? Can this be used with the population of interest? Are experts available to provide insight? Will you need to create a new intervention? Are resources available to support this solution? How will you know intervention is working? How often should data be gathered? What data? What support is needed?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intervention has been selected and will address the root causes.</li> <li>• Multiple options for interventions have been identified and evaluated or sufficient justification has been demonstrated to consider a single intervention.</li> <li>• Minimum specifications for the desired intervention have been identified and take into consideration existing barriers.</li> <li>• There has been a successful development or adaptation of an intervention that directly relates to the theory of change.</li> <li>• Core components of the intervention have been clearly defined, including how they relate to the rationale.</li> </ul>



## Change Management Questions

CQI/CHANGE MANAGEMENT PHASE <i>(Questions to ask about the project during each phase)</i>	IMPORTANT MILESTONES FOR MOVING TO THE NEXT PHASE OF THE WORK
<b>Phase IV: Plan, Prepare, and Implement</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p><b>Assess readiness and plan for implementation of the intervention(s). <i>Is the CIP ready to implement the intervention?</i></b>  <i>Do you have the capacity to implement the intervention?            Who needs to be on the implementation team? When will intervention begin? How long will it be in place? What is the scale of the intervention?            What are the most important evaluation questions? What fidelity measures are needed? How frequently will data be collected? What resources are needed for outcome measurement or data collection? What is the data collection plan? What tasks are required to implement? What is the timeframe? How will implementation be staged?</i></p> <p><b>Build capacity to support implementation. <i>What does the CIP need to support implementation?</i></b>  <i>What capacities/competencies need to be developed? How will this occur? What resources are needed for program? Will this intervention require staff training? How will this be achieved? Are there external partnerships that need to be developed?            Has the CIP implemented similar interventions in the past?</i></p> <p><b>Pilot and/or stage implementation of the interventions(s). <i>Changes to practice begin. What is the best way to pilot/stage intervention?</i></b>  <i>What environmental factors should be considered re: timing of change? What priorities impact scheduling of intervention?            What are the sites selected for intervention (highest need, best capacity)? Is it feasible to collect data as planned? Is implementation going as planned? What is the plan to monitor implementation over time? What feedback should be solicited from stakeholders?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strategy for implementation has been created and the likelihood of implementation success has been assessed.</li> <li>• An implementation plan has been created with tasks and timelines.</li> <li>• Evidence suggests that capacity has been built to support implementation, including the ability to measure progress against project milestones and intervention outcomes.</li> <li>• An appropriately scaled plan has been documented and is being implemented to facilitate the change from the current state to the future state. This includes at a minimum:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Input from internal and external leaders on necessary actions for the change to take effect;</li> <li>○ Indicators to know whether the transition is occurring; and</li> <li>○ Feedback measures to determine if the transition initially appears to be having the desired result.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Phase V: Evaluate and Apply Findings</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
<p><b>Collect and use data to adjust the intervention and/or implementation strategies. <i>Think about fidelity, effectiveness, and sustainability of the program. Is the intervention meeting expectations?</i></b>  <i>Do data suggest improvements are needed? Will data be meaningful to other regions? Confidence in data collection? How will data be reported and used? Is data qualitative or quantitative? Resources for data analysis? What outcomes are being achieved? What changes could improve fidelity, effectiveness, sustainability? How/when will change be made (resources, persons)? Feedback from stakeholders?</i></p> <p><b>Evaluate to measure implementation quality and short- and long-term outcomes. <i>Is the intervention meeting objectives/outcomes?</i></b>  <i>Do short-term outcome data suggest significant progress? Was intervention implemented as intended? What changes should be made to achieve outcomes? Consensus that the correct things are being measured?</i></p> <p><b>Make decisions to further spread, adjust, or discontinue the intervention. <i>Should the intervention be modified, discontinued, or taken to scale?</i></b>  <i>Has intervention achieved desired outcomes? Any additional positive outcomes? Is it sustainable? Can intervention be expanded (other jurisdiction, populations)? What components are critical for success? Are additional supports needed for new sites? How will the CIP know implementation is occurring with fidelity? How will CIP monitor program on ongoing basis?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data has been collected and analyzed to adjust the intervention and/or implementation strategies.</li> <li>• The intervention has been adjusted based on usability testing and data analysis and is ready for broad implementation.</li> <li>• Implementation is of high quality (i.e., the CIP has clearly defined high fidelity practice in terms of observable outcomes).</li> <li>• CIP has collected and reviewed data pertinent to implementation fidelity and short- and long-term outcomes.</li> <li>• A decision has been made to adjust, sustain, spread, or discontinue the intervention based on the evidence collected, and the decision and rationale has been documented.</li> </ul>