



# **Request for Applications for Implementation Projects**

## **Introduction**

### **PURPOSE OF THE MIDWEST CHILD WELFARE IMPLEMENTATION CENTER (MCWIC)**

The Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center (MCWIC) is one of five Child Welfare Implementation Centers established by cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau (CB) in October 2008. Our role is to support and facilitate communication and networking across public child welfare systems, and to assist States and Tribes to develop and execute multi-year strategic plans for sustainable systems change to improve the quality and effectiveness of child welfare services. These changes will be focused on organizational culture, administration, and direct practice with children and families. MCWIC will work with States and Native American Tribes in Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region V (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota) and ACF Region VII (Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas).

MCWIC is a member of the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network and will work collaboratively with the Child Welfare National Resource Centers and other members of the T/TA Network that are also providing assistance to child welfare agencies. Our work will be guided by, but not limited to, the Child and Family Services Reviews findings, related Program Improvement Plans, Child and Family Services Plans and other strategic plans, and the System of Care framework. MCWIC team will work with child welfare leaders and managers to:

- improve the quality and performance of child welfare services, based on organizational needs identified and prioritized by the child welfare agency;
- provide the expertise and resources needed to enhance, rather than duplicate, agency capacity to effectively implement and sustain systemic change;
- facilitate communication and peer-to-peer networking across State and Tribal child welfare systems;
- institutionalize child welfare principles, policies, and evidence-based or promising practice models; and

- build and disseminate knowledge about effective implementation in the child welfare field.

## **PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS**

The purpose of implementation projects is to facilitate sustainable systems change and build the capacities of child welfare systems for improved performance and positive change. Implementation projects are intended to be substantial and capable of supporting implementation activities that will drive sustainable positive change in organizational culture and child welfare practice. Implementation projects will be individualized, strengths-based, and highly responsive to the needs of our State and Tribal partners. Project applications will be evaluated to support this purpose: Applications should *demonstrate* how projects will effect sustainable, substantial and positive systems change in organizational culture and child welfare practice.

## **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

State child welfare agencies within ACF Regions V and VII, and Tribes or Tribal consortia within those Regions that are currently receiving Title IV-B grant funds administered by the CB, are eligible for MCWIC implementation projects. If a consortium applies for an implementation project, CB will not require that every member of that consortium participate in the proposed project activities as a condition of eligibility. Federally recognized Tribes that are not receiving Title IV-B grant funds are not eligible for implementation projects.

## **GENERAL PROJECT GUIDELINES**

- 1) Implementation projects will vary in scope and funding, depending upon agency needs and challenges. Important dimensions of potential projects include: significance of identified agency child welfare issues; need for MCWIC resources to address those issues; system focus of the project; likelihood of improved measurable outcomes for children and families; involvement and commitment of *internal* stakeholders; collaboration with and commitment of *external* stakeholders; plan for sustainability; and the feasibility of conducting a meaningful evaluation of project outcomes.
- 2) States and Tribes will submit a brief concept paper and receive written feedback from MCWIC prior to submission of a full project application. Agencies may submit concept papers at any time prior to the due date and they will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The following Table summarizes the due dates for receipt of concept papers, full project applications, project start dates and project end dates.

**Table 1. Timelines for MCWIC Implementation Project Proposal Review Process**

For Implementation Projects to begin:	July 1, 2009 (expedited review process)	October 1, 2009 (expedited review process)	October 1, 2010	October 1, 2011 (last possible project start date)
Final Date for Agencies to Submit Concept Papers	April 1, 2009	April 27, 2009	Feb 15, 2010	Feb 15, 2011
Review and Individualized Written Feedback on Concept Papers to Agencies	May 1, 2009	May 15, 2009	April 1, 2010	April 1, 2011
Final Date for Agencies to Submit Formal Applications	May 15, 2009	June 15, 2009	June 1, 2010	June 1, 2011
End Date of Implementation Project	<p>For a 2 year* project: Sept 30, 2011</p> <p>For a 3 year* project: Sept 30, 2012</p> <p>For a 4 year* project: Sept 28, 2013</p> <p>*Projects that are awarded on July 1, 2009, will last for 27 months for 2-year projects, 39 months for 3-year projects, and 51 months for 4-year projects, consistent with the Federal Fiscal Year</p>	<p>For a 2 year project: Sept 30, 2011</p> <p>For a 3 year project: Sept 30, 2012</p> <p>For a 4 year project: Sept 28, 2013</p> <p>(Note: this is the last date to begin a 4 year project)</p>	<p>For a 2 year project: Sept 30, 2012</p> <p>For a 3 year project: Sept 28, 2013</p>	<p>Only 2 year projects may begin on this date, to end: Sept 28, 2013</p>

- 3) Full project applications will be reviewed and selected based upon specific criteria, detailed in these application guidelines. The availability of funds will be contingent on the scope and number of funded projects.
- 4) Each project must be of at least 24 months and no longer than 4 years in duration, and all projects must end by September 28, 2013. Projects that commence in 2009 will have July 1<sup>st</sup> or October 1<sup>st</sup> start dates, and thereafter projects will begin on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, the latest possible start date for an implementation project will be October 1, 2011. Refer to Table 1 for specific time frames for project beginning and ending dates.
- 5) Each project budget will be a minimum of \$100,000 per year, with a maximum of \$700,000 per year. Applicants will not propose specific project budgets. Rather, MCWIC will work with an applicant to develop a proposed project budget in response to the needs identified in the project application. Implementation projects will not be in the form of direct awards to States or Tribes. MCWIC will partner with each child welfare agency that is awarded an implementation project, and MCWIC will be responsible for overall project administration, evaluation, and fiscal disbursements. Project budgets include the cost of MCWIC activities directly related to a specific implementation project. Negotiated budget agreements will be reflected in each implementation project's Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **APPLICATION PROCESS OUTLINE**

To ensure that applications for implementation projects from States and Tribes are informed by a system change perspective, the application process consists of the following steps:

- 1) Submission of a Two-Page Concept Paper:** In *no more than* two single spaced pages, interested child welfare agencies should describe a proposed implementation project.
- 2) Screening Assessment of Needs/Proposed Project:** Upon receipt of a concept paper, MCWIC will consult with Federal and T/TA Network representatives who have had contact with the applicant agency.
- 3) Teleconference Regarding Concept Paper:** MCWIC will arrange an in-depth discussion (potentially several hours) of the concept paper involving representatives of the applicant agency and MCWIC's multidisciplinary staff.
- 4) Written Feedback:** MCWIC will provide written feedback to the applicant agency documenting MCWIC's multidisciplinary assessment of the concept paper.
- 5) Submission of a Formal Application:** Upon receipt and review of MCWIC's written feedback, interested child welfare agencies may submit a formal application, using the process described below.

- 6) **Review of Formal Applications:** MCWIC and its Advisory Board of regional and national child welfare and organizational change experts will review and evaluate all Formal Applications.
- 7) **Award of Implementation Projects:** The Children's Bureau, with input from MCWIC and its advisory board, determines which Formal Applications are funded.

Each step in the application process is described in greater detail below.

## **Steps in the Application Process**

### **Step One: Submit a Two-Page Concept Paper**

#### **ROLLING REVIEW OF CONCEPT PAPERS**

Two-page concept papers may be submitted and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Child welfare agencies may submit concept papers as they identify needs, develop strategies to meet those needs, and propose implementation projects to implement those strategies. MCWIC will review and provide feedback on all concept papers received. Concept papers should be submitted to MCWIC no later than April 27, 2009, to be considered for implementation project funding for the first cycle of awards. Refer to Table 1 for concept paper deadlines for subsequent years. Agencies are encouraged to submit concept papers well before the deadline to maximally benefit from MCWIC feedback.

#### **TWO-PAGE CONCEPT PAPER**

In no more than two single-spaced pages, provide the following:

- 1) Name of State/Tribal agency, contact person name and contact information;
- 2) Brief statement of system needs;
- 3) Brief statement of previous efforts, if any, to address system needs;
- 4) Brief description of proposed strategies to meet identified needs;
- 5) Brief description of potential implementation project;
- 6) Brief statement of planning efforts, if any, that have already been completed for the proposed project; and
- 7) Brief statement of other system changes that are necessary to support successful implementation.

Submission: Mail submissions are acceptable and electronic submissions are preferred. If the application is submitted electronically, Word documents are acceptable and pdf (Adobe) format is preferred.

#### **SUBMISSION ADDRESSES**

**Two-page concept papers** may be sent to:

[shansen7@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:shansen7@unlnotes.unl.edu)

OR

Sarah Hansen  
Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center  
206 S. 13th St., Suite 1000  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0227

### **Step Two: Review of Two-Page Concept Paper**

Following the receipt of the concept paper, MCWIC's multidisciplinary staff will collect and review relevant historical data. MCWIC will also consult with Children's Bureau Regional and Central Office staff. After those discussions, MCWIC will arrange an in-depth discussion of the concept paper with representatives of the agency and MCWIC's multidisciplinary staff. This discussion will utilize videoconferencing when practical. The purpose of the discussion will be to:

1. Deepen MCWIC's understanding of the nature and system context of the issues.
2. Begin an assessment of the multi-system factors that must be addressed to produce sustainable system change.
3. Provide MCWIC the opportunity to make an informal assessment of the organization's strengths, barriers, and general organizational readiness for change.
4. Discuss the agency's previous experiences with the T/TA Network, and identify facilitators and barriers to producing sustainable system change.

MCWIC and the agency will mutually determine whether additional in-depth discussions of the concept paper are necessary.

### **Step Three: Feedback on Two-Page Concept Paper**

Following the consultation and in-depth discussion, MCWIC will provide written feedback to the agency providing an assessment of the system factors that contribute to the presenting issue, the system factors that would need to be addressed to achieve sustainable change, and the strengths and barriers that would impact the successful implementation of the project. The purpose of this written feedback will be to assist the

agency in the development of an implementation project application as the agency deems appropriate; it will also provide the agency with an assessment from which to proceed in the event the agency decides not to apply for an implementation project.

## **Step Four: Development of Implementation Project Application**

### **APPLICATION FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS AND PREPARATION**

**Formatting:** Each implementation project application must be typed, double-spaced, with at least one inch margins on each side and the top and bottom, using standard 12-point fonts (such as Times New Roman or Courier). All pages must be numbered.

**Page Limit:** The page limit for the **Project Description** section of the implementation project application is **20 pages**. Pages over this page limit will be removed from the application and will not be reviewed. This page limit does not include the cover sheet, abstract/summary page, the assurances, or the appendices.

**Submission:** Mail submissions are acceptable and electronic submissions are preferred. If the application is submitted electronically, Word documents are acceptable and pdf (Adobe) format is preferred.

**Review of Applications:** Child welfare agencies may submit implementation project applications as they are able, following the submission of a concept paper and the subsequent feedback from, and dialogue with, MCWIC as described herein. Applications must be received by the due date indicated in Table 1 in order to be considered for that year's funding. Project awards will be contingent on the scope of previously funded implementation projects.

### **APPLICATION/APPLICATION CONTENTS**

1. **COVER SHEET:** Child Welfare Agency Name; Name of Contact Person; Contact Person's mailing address; Contact Person's e-mail address; Contact Person's telephone number; Project Title; Resources Requested; Proposed Project Period (Start Date and End Date)
2. **PROJECT SUMMARY/ABSTRACT** (one page maximum, double-spaced). This can be condensed from the concept paper. If the proposed project has changed since the submission of your concept paper, please summarize the new proposal and include the rationale for the change.
3. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**
  - a. **Objectives and Statement of Need (20 points)** Please include the following:

- i. Description of the need your agency faces.
- ii. Project objectives.
- iii. Relevant data that demonstrates the need for the project.
- iv. Reason for involvement and support from MCWIC to address the need.

**b. Approach (45 points)**

Describe proposed activities and estimated timelines for 24 months (minimum) up to 51 months (maximum, see Table 1 for potential project timelines) in a feasible work plan. Include action steps that account for all activities and objectives that address the following points:

- i. Organizational context of implementation project.
- ii. Relevant multi-systemic implementation activities.
- iii. Activities and commitment of any partnering organizations.
- iv. Potential barriers and challenges and how MCWIC assistance will address these issues.
- v. Relationship between project plan and improved outcomes for children and families, referencing specific CFSR outcomes, PIP or other documents as relevant.

**c. Organizational Commitment (25 points)**

- i. Describe roles and responsibilities of agency staff as they relate to the proposed implementation project, including designation of a project manager with sufficient time to dedicate to project implementation.
- ii. Describe evidence of commitment of agency leadership to proposed implementation project.
- iii. Describe evidence of organizational readiness for change.
- iv. Describe a plan for sustainability and institutionalization of change following completion of formal implementation project and termination of MCWIC support.
- v. Describe resources the agency expects to contribute or dedicate to the proposed implementation project in FTE, as well as any other necessary fiscal resources.
- vi. Describe resources the identified partners expect to contribute or dedicate to the proposed implementation project in FTE, as well as



other necessary fiscal resources. Provide letters of project commitment from these partnering organizations in the Appendix.

**d. Evaluation (10 points)**

- i. Identify significant questions to be addressed by the evaluation of the implementation project (e.g. what outcomes will you use to know if your project is successful?). *NOTE: A fully developed evaluation plan is not required at the time of the application, as MCWIC will assist in the development and execution of the project evaluation.*
- ii. Describe the agency's capacity and infrastructure to support data collection to assist in the measurement of implementation change and outcomes.

**4. ASSURANCES (required)**

- a. Provide a statement of the agency's agreement to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with MCWIC for the planning and execution of an implementation project.
- b. Provide a statement of the agency's agreement to assist in and participate with MCWIC in an evaluation of the implementation project.

**5. APPENDICES**

- a. Brief biographies or resumes (2-page maximum for each) for key project staff and partners.
- b. Letter(s) of commitment for all implicated partner organizations.
- c. Organizational capacity references. Please provide names and contact information for individuals who are best able to speak to the agency's capacity to undertake this project.

**SUBMISSION ADDRESSES**

Full applications may be sent to:

[shansen7@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:shansen7@unlnotes.unl.edu)

OR

Sarah Hansen  
Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center  
206 S. 13th St., Suite 1000  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0227

**Step Five:**

## Evaluation of Applications

All full applications will be reviewed by a review panel consisting of representatives of MCWIC, MCWIC's Advisory Board, members of the T/TA Network, and the Children's Bureau. MCWIC will participate in rating and discussing the applications but will not vote on the final application decision recommendation. This review will be based on the elements listed above, using the specific evaluation criteria set forth below. The Children's Bureau makes the final approval regarding Implementation Project selection.

### Step Six: Award of Implementation Projects

Each application that is evaluated by the review panel and recommended for selection, **and** that is **subsequently** approved by the Children's Bureau will be awarded an implementation project. All applicants will be notified of the results of the review. Applicants that are not selected for implementation projects will be advised of the outcome of the review, and will receive written feedback. Applicants not selected for implementation projects in a particular round of awards may re-apply in a subsequent round, and may receive guidance from MCWIC in the development of a subsequent application. Applicants not selected for implementation projects may also seek technical assistance from the Children's Bureau and the T/TA Network. Please see the "Rolling Applications" section for more information.

### QUESTIONS?

Contact Mark Ells or Michelle Graef, Project Directors [mells1@unl.edu](mailto:mells1@unl.edu), [mgraef1@unl.edu](mailto:mgraef1@unl.edu), or call toll-free 888-523-8055.

## Implementation Project Application Review and Selection Criteria

All Formal Applications will be scored based upon the following selection criteria. Reviewers will score the applications independently, scores will be compiled, and the applications will be rank ordered against other pending applications. Reviewers will also be asked to comment on overall readiness, need, feasibility, and commitment. Readiness for organizational and systemic change is an important area of assessment, but reviewers will not use "readiness" as the sole or principle criterion for recommending an implementation project.

Applications with the highest scores will be forwarded as recommended for approval to the Children's Bureau. Applicant agencies whose applications are not recommended for approval will be provided comprehensive feedback and consultation from MCWIC to prepare for potential resubmission, as noted above. Applications that are not selected for Implementation Projects will also be referred to the Children's Bureau and the T/TA Network for other forms of T/TA to meet identified needs.

### Application Review Rating Scale

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Descriptive Guidance</u>
5	<b>Excellent</b> - The response exceeds all requirements and expectations
4	<b>Very Good</b> -The response satisfies all requirements and exceeds some expectations
3	<b>Good</b> - The response satisfies all requirements
2	<b>Fair</b> - The response meets minimal requirements but has identifiable deficits
1	<b>Minimal</b> - The response is incomplete and does not provide adequate information to evaluate criteria
0	<b>Nonresponsive</b> -The response did not address criteria

### Application Review Criteria

1. **Cover Sheet: NOT EVALUATED**
2. **Project Abstract: NOT EVALUATED**
3. **Project Description: Total Potential Points = 100**

<b>3a. Criteria for Evaluating Objectives and Statement of Need 20 POINTS</b>	Max	Score
1. Provides clear statement of problem/issue to be addressed	5	
2. Includes desired objectives and relevant systemic factors and/or outcomes that are the target of this project	5	
3. Identifies agency capacities and strengths that will be used to address the problem and support readiness for change	5	
4. Includes evidence and sufficient data to support the need for proposed implementation project	5	
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>20</b>	
Reviewer's Comments ( <i>Strengths/Limitations</i> ):		

<b>3c. Criteria for Evaluating the Approach</b> <b>45 POINTS</b>	Max	Score
1. Describes proposed activities and estimated timelines for 24-51 months (as appropriate for funding cycle) in a feasible work plan	10	
2. Identifies potential challenges and barriers to successfully implementing the project and how MCWIC can assist in addressing these issues	10	
3. Identifies key staff and stakeholders/collaborators (both internal and external) and discussion of their involvement in planning, commitment and willingness to link with other relevant projects or initiatives, and roles in proposed project activities	10	
4. Describes how the proposed project is integrated with the agency's strategic plans, such as Child and Family Services Plan, Child Welfare reform initiatives, CSFR, or PIP	5	
5. Relationship between plan and outcomes: Gives a clear description of the desired change, how it will impact the problem/issue, how it will result in systemic change that positively impacts children and families, and includes objectives that lead to achievement of identified goal and outcomes	10	
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>45</b>	
Reviewer's Comments ( <i>Strengths/Limitations</i> ):		
<b>3d. Criteria for Evaluating Organizational Commitment</b> <b>25 POINTS</b>	Max	Score
1. Demonstrates evidence of agency readiness for change	5	
2. Organizational Context: Provides evidence of organizational and leadership commitment and designation of a project manager with sufficient time to dedicate to project implementation	5	
3. Defines roles and responsibilities of agency leadership and staff in implementing project	5	
4. Discusses how the resulting systemic change will be institutionalized and project efforts will be sustained	5	
5. Describes commitment from necessary partnering organizations representing systems implicated in creating and supporting	5	

agency changes		
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>25</b>	
Reviewer's Comments ( <i>Strengths/Limitations</i> ):		
<b>4. Criteria for Reviewing Evaluation Capability</b> <b>10 POINTS</b>	MAX	SCORE
1. Identifies significant questions to be addressed by the evaluation	5	
2. Describes agency capacity and infrastructure to support data collection to measure implementation change and outcomes	5	
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>10</b>	
Reviewer's Comments ( <i>Strengths/Limitations</i> ):		

**TOTAL APPLICATION SCORE = \_\_\_\_\_/100**

<b>Reviewer's Comments on overall readiness, need, feasibility, and commitment:</b>