

**MARYLAND JUDICIARY
COURT OF APPEALS
FOSTER CARE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM GRANTS – FY2014
NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

ISSUE DATE: AUGUST 1, 2013

DUE DATE: AUGUST 30, 2013

General Background

All entities seeking funds from the Maryland Judiciary, Foster Care Court Improvement Project, must submit a grant application with a budget and budget justification. The number of projects selected and the amounts of the grants will depend on the funds available. Funding for projects is not guaranteed.

Grant applications will be reviewed by a grant review committee. Once the committee has approved an application for funding, an award letter defining terms and conditions, along with a copy of the grant application will be sent to the grantee.

Acceptance of a grant automatically gives any authorized representative of the Maryland Judiciary access to and the right to examine all records, papers, books, and documents related to a Judiciary grant for the purposes of assuring compliance with policies and guidelines, program evaluation and research.

The Maryland Judiciary, Foster Care Court Improvement Project administers the grants. Funds, appropriated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, provide financial assistance to State and local units of government, non-profit organizations and institutions of higher education within the State of Maryland to assist state courts in improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for abused and neglected children in the child welfare system. Recipients of these funds would be subject to the provisions of Part B of the Title IV of the Social Security (specifically, § 438 of the Act); Public Law 103-333, Sections 507 & 508; and the administrative requirements under 45 CFR Part 92.

Name of Grant Program: Child Welfare Program – FY2014

Administering Department Contact Information:

Foster Care Court Improvement Project, Court of Appeals, Maryland Judiciary
Tracy Watkins-Tribbitt, Director
2001-B Commerce Park Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-260-1427
Tracy.Watkins-Tribbitt@mdcourts.gov

Scope of Solicitation:

For best consideration, applicants should clearly identify the outcomes they seek to achieve with the specified grant activities and develop measurable objectives to determine progress in achieving these outcomes. Activities should fall into one or more of the following strategic categories to help achieve measurable outcomes. Funds may be used for the following activities:

Court Function Improvement

- Implementing new initiatives, local and national best practices, and recommendations that improve the processing of child welfare cases as identified by the court.
- Formalizing and/or improving relationships with the child welfare agency.
- Increasing and improving the engagement of the entire family in court processes relating to child welfare, family preservation, family reunification and adoption.
- Improving the handling of cases involving the interstate placement of children.
- Incorporating trauma-informed services and evidenced based practices into court and legal representation practice.
- Monitoring Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) and related TPR/Guardianship and Adoption cases for statutory time frame compliance.

Capacity Building

- Cross training with multi-disciplinary stakeholders.
- Educational or training programs for the bench, masters, and/or clerks in the area of compliance with federal statutes and regulations in child welfare cases, including content of court orders.
- Collecting data and developing data collection infrastructure, sharing data among child welfare agency, board of education, and other State agencies responsible for child well-being.
- Linked agency-court data systems.
- Assisting in the adoption and implementation of court performance measures to allow court systems to analyze their performance regarding child safety, permanency, procedural fairness and timeliness, as well as, other aspects of child well-being.
- One-time or multiple education programs for court staff, including Judges, Masters, and attorneys involved in child welfare cases, including contracting with outside trainers and/or lecturers.
- Development or maintenance of ADR services for families and children involved in the child welfare system.
- Improvement of legal representation for children and families.
- Other programs that enhance the court's ability to serve families and children.

Systemic Reform

- Jurisdiction-specific CFSR program improvement plan (PIP) development and implementation, and legislative changes.
- Efforts to encourage and promote concurrent planning pursuant to ASFA.
- Increasing and improving the engagement of the entire family in court processes relating to child welfare, family preservation, family reunification and adoption.

Maximum Award Amount

Determined by available appropriation and FCCIP priorities.

Match Requirement

There is no match requirement.

Eligible Grantees

Eligible grantees include the courts, court-related agencies, state and local agencies within Maryland, and non-profit organizations within the state that enhance the Maryland Judiciary's effectiveness in processing child abuse and neglect cases.

Funding Period

Grants are awarded on a Federal fiscal year cycle: October 1, 2013 thru September 30, 2014. Grantees must expend all grant funds by the end of the funding period.

Distribution of Funds

Funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis upon submission of a Request for Payment along with Progress and Financial reports. Templates for reporting will be provided by the Foster Care Court Improvement Project. Requests for payment can be made quarterly: Quarter 1: Oct. thru Dec. 2013; Quarter 2: Jan. thru March 2014; Quarter 3: April thru June 2014; Quarter 4: July thru Sept. 2014.

Continued grant fund disbursement shall be dependent on grantees' satisfactory progress toward deliverables, and the availability of funding. As such, the FCCIP reserves the right to withhold funding or change funding amounts based on the availability of funds, or non-performance of grantee.

Reporting Requirements

Grantees must submit quarterly program progress and financial reports. Templates will be provided by the funder. Failure to submit required reports and requests for payment may result in the Judiciary's denial of grant payments and future funding.

Grantees may also be required to develop a plan for disseminating materials developed with grant funding, and/or the outcomes and findings of their project. Such requirements will be defined in the grant award letter.

Project Evaluation

Grantees shall assure that projects include an evaluation component to assess the effectiveness of the program. FCCIP recognizes the importance of using data to identify, inform, and systematically monitor the implementation and results of programs and interventions in an ongoing manner. By accepting a FCCIP grant, the grantee agrees to implement a continuous quality improvement approach and accurately reflect anticipated outcomes for improved court functioning, improved engagement of the entire family, and/or capacity building for the court; measurable objectives and related activities to be conducted for each anticipated outcome; and use of data and findings in improving or retooling program components cooperate with Judiciary-sponsored evaluation projects.

Modifications

Grant funds may not be used for any purpose or activities other than those stated in the approved grant application unless a written change of purpose request is submitted and approved by the administering department.

Unless otherwise defined in the award letter, changes under 10% of an approved budget category may be made to the request for modification worksheet. Changes that exceed 10% of an approved budget category must be submitted in writing prior to making the change for written approval by the administering department.

Grantees must inform the administering department within 15 days of any changes in key program personnel, program name, address or other contact information.

Personnel and Payroll Records

Grantees must follow their respective organizations' written payroll, personnel, and time and attendance procedures for each position supported by a Judiciary grant.

Timesheets for each grant-funded employee must provide a brief description of the daily grant activity and the hours worked.

New Positions/Programs

All new positions and/or programs supported by grant award must commence within 90 days of the beginning of the funding period or other projected start date as indicated in the grantee's budget. If the project is not operational within that timeframe, the grantee must report the steps taken to initiate the project, the reason for the delay, and the expected start date.

Grantees can request an extension of this 90 day period by submitting a written explanation for the need for the cause for delay and need for extension. All requests must be received prior to the expiration of the 90 day period.

Failure to implement new positions or projects within this 90 period or to obtain an extension from the FCCIP may result in a cancellation or delay of fund distribution.

Procurement

Grantees must follow their State, county governments' (in the case of a Circuit Court) or organizations' written procurement policies in expending grant funds. If an applicant does not have written policies, they must follow the Procurement Policy for the Judicial Branch.

Upon receipt of goods and/or services, ownership and liability shall transfer to the grantee, and the grantee shall assume responsibility for all routine equipment maintenance and/or replacement costs.

Grantees intending to use Judiciary grant funds for contractual services must notify potential contractors that funds for the project originated from the Judiciary.

All procurement actions shall be subject to Judiciary and Legislative Audit review.

Subawards

Not permitted.

Travel Policies

Grantees must follow their State, county governments' (in the case of a Circuit Court) or organizations' written travel policies in expending grant funds. If an applicant does not have written policies, they must follow the State Joint Travel Regulations Judicial Branch Travel Policy. Any funds used for travel must be done so in accordance with all applicable federal laws, regulations and policies governing the use of Federal funds. Any expenditure found to have been made in violation of these requirements is subject to disallowance and recoupment by FCCIP.

Accounting Requirements and Audits

Grantees shall maintain full and accurate records of all financial transactions and accounts related to the grant-funded project, in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, for a minimum of three years after the grant period ends. Records shall include, but are not limited to, requests for payment and receipts for expenses incurred, and time sheets for any salaries paid for with grant funds. Grantees shall make these records available for review by authorized representatives of the Maryland Judiciary.

Grantees must establish separate revenue accounts into which they will deposit Judiciary grant funds and separate expenditure accounts to which they will charge Judiciary grant expenditures. The Judiciary shall not reimburse grantees or authorize payment for any expenditure that does not reflect compliance with the written procurement policy.

Funds specifically budgeted and/or received for one project may not be used to support another project or program. Recipients are prohibited from commingling funds.

Please note this grant does not permit indirect costs as an allowable cost category.

Approved expenditures should be reviewed for accuracy, and then checked against the organization's financial records before financial reports and request for payments are submitted for reimbursement. Accounts must be reconciled before the grant can be closed out (See Close Out).

Grantees may be subject to periodic management reviews or audits. The reviews or audits may be announced or unannounced.

Close-out

All final progress and financial reports must be satisfactorily submitted to the Foster Care Court Improvement Project within 60 days after the end of the grant period (by November 30, 2014); approval of the final request for payment will serve as confirmation that project has been successfully completed; receipt of payment by recipient confirms close out has been completed.

Fee collection (if authorized by law):

Not permitted.

Debarment

The Judiciary will not permit a grant recipient to spend award funds on an individual or firm that is suspended or debarred from entering into contracts with the State. Grantees shall check the debarment list for all prospective sub recipients (contractors and grantees). The list of debarred and suspended contractors is available on the Board of Public Works web page at: www.bpw.state.md.us

Site Visits

Grantees may be subject to site visits by FCCIP staff. The site visits will be designed to ensure compliance with the grant guidelines and evaluate the project in terms of its stated goals and objectives. Site visits may also include a fiscal review of grantee/programmatic expenditures.

Acknowledgment of Support

Grantees are required to acknowledge the support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families and the Maryland Foster Care Court Improvement Project on published materials or products created as part of the grant-funded project. Specific use and wording must be approved by the administering department.

Application Scoring Process

Applications will be scored based on content, innovation, statement of need, projected outcomes and evaluation component. Application must be submitted on time, and will be reviewed for accuracy and completeness; failure to adhere to these requirements may adversely affect the application score.

Application and Instructions

Forms and instructions for submitting grant applications are in the **CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM – FY2014, GRANT APPLICATION**. Two original applications must be submitted by mail, postmarked on or before **August 30, 2013** and should be directed to:

Maryland Judiciary
Foster Care Court Improvement Project
2001-B Commerce Park Drive
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
ATTENTION: Tracy Watkins-Tribbitt

Envelopes should be marked: **FCCIP CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM GRANT – FY2014**