



# THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

## TASK FORCE ON FOSTER CARE

201 WEST 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, ROOM 104 • P. O. BOX 12248 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2066  
TELEPHONE 512.463.9352 • FACSIMILE 512-463-8854

CHAIR:  
HON. JOHN SPECIA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:  
TINA AMBERBOY

### COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

#### FY2008 Grants

#### *Requests for Applications (RFA)*

Issued: August 24, 2007

#### Grant Purpose

Court Improvement Program (CIP) grants are federal funds awarded to each state's highest court by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to assist state courts improve safety, well-being and permanency outcomes for abused or neglected children in the foster care system. These children and their families need extraordinary performance from the courts and the child welfare agency. Only programs that collaborate to improve these outcomes will be considered. Supplanting state, local government or non-profit agency funds or activities is prohibited.

#### Grant Fund Categories

**New Single-Year Grants -- Fiscal Year 2008 -- \$ 340,000 (estimated)**

**Minimum:** No minimum is established per application;

**Maximum:** \$100,000 per application.

**Continued Grants – Fiscal Year 2008 – Applicable to current grant recipients.**

**An application for continued funding is required each year.**

#### Eligibility

Application is open to state agencies, local governments including courts, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. The applicant must demonstrate that they are engaged in collaborative activities aimed at improving outcomes in Texas courts presiding over child abuse and neglect cases.

#### Grant Cycle

- Continued grants are awarded for a one-year period from October 1 to September 30. **The application should be submitted by 5:00 PM on September 7, 2007.**
- New grants are awarded from date of funding through September 2008. The grant cycle will be specified on the awarding document if a program is funded. **The Intent to Submit Application (ISA) can be submitted at anytime. If authorized to proceed, the application should be submitted as soon as practical but must be submitted by 5:00 PM on December 31, 2007.**

## Targeted Use of the FY2008 Funds

There are three types of CIP grants, all intended to improve court outcomes and systems. Each grant requires court-focused, collaborative effort to produce tangible, measurable, and time-specific outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system that lead to safety, permanency and child and family well-being.

### Basic Grants

<http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/cip/pdf/basic-final-app.pdf>

The Basic CIP Grant is available to state court systems to conduct assessments of their foster care and adoption laws and judicial processes and to develop and implement plans for system improvement. In making decisions about allocating funds, priority is given to legal and judicial issues identified in the CIP Strategic Plan. See the link above to learn about Texas' Basic Grant strategy in FY2008.

#### New Initiatives targeted by the Basic CIP Strategic Plan

- Office of Parental Representation
- Incarcerated Parent Project
- Establishing a 24-hour legal hotline for children and youth who are in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS
- Nonprofit organization to mentor parents involved in child welfare cases
- Videoconferencing between Courts and Regional CAC/CASA Centers
- Development of a free or low-cost webpage that offers judges, prosecutors, attorneys *ad litem*, CASA and parents an overview of the many resources addressing different aspects of child welfare cases
- Assessment of the impact of Texas Family Code Section 263.401, requiring a finding of extraordinary circumstances for a case to exceed the 12 month deadline.

### Data Collection and Analysis Grants (referred to as the "Data Grant")

<http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/cip/pdf/final-data-app-to-ACF.pdf>

Applications must demonstrate how funds will be used specifically for cases involving child abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption and legal guardianship of children in foster care to improve data collection and analysis for such cases, and how this will produce safe and timely permanency decisions for the children in the State. See the link above to learn about Texas' Data Grant strategy in FY2008.

#### Grant Opportunities for Local Governments

- Improving Court Performance in child protection cases
- Developing and implementing policies and procedures that assist court employees to collect and use data in a more effective manner
- Developing and using specific tools and automating court functions, such as electronic filing, creation and printing of documents, electronic transmission of information to parties Collaborating on training on improving data collection and analysis

### Training Grants

<http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/cip/pdf/final-trg-app-to-ACF.pdf>

Applications must demonstrate how grant funds will be used for training initiatives that are jointly planned and executed with the State child welfare agency, and CIP. See the link above to learn about Texas' Training Grant strategy in FY2008.

## Application Requirements

- **Intent to Submit Application (ISA) Requirement** – New applicants must submit a short and succinct description of a child protection court improvement that the applicant wants to implement via the CIP ISA form at any time (See Attachment A). After review by the grant administrator, an applicant may be invited to submit a full application.

- **Submit Full Application** – Invited applicants must submit an application (See Attachment B) in PDF format or in hardcopy as described in the “Instructions for Writing the Full Application” section.
  - **Continued applications should be submitted by 5:00 PM on September 7, 2007.**
  - **New applications should be submitted as soon as practical but must be submitted by 5:00 PM on December 31, 2007.**
- **Judicial Support** – All applicants must submit a letter of support from (a) judge(s) who will participate or assist in the implementation of the program. (See Attachment C). Attachment C should be modified to adequately demonstrate the judge’s level of commitment to and involvement in the specific program in the application. **These documents must be mailed or e-mailed with the application.**
- **Resolution** – All applicants must provide a Resolution (see Attachment D). Counties and non-profits must have the resolution adopted by the applicant’s board and signed by the applicant’s authorized official. A state agency or educational institution must submit a resolution from the director of the agency or institution; board approval is not necessary unless required by law or agency (institution) rule.

## Program Requirements

CIP encourages applicants to develop new and innovative pilot programs that will result in improved outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

- a. **Fund Use** - Funds must be used to pay for the direct and/or administrative costs of providing and improving courts consistent with the strategic plans submitted by the Supreme Court of Texas to ACF.
- b. **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.
- c. **Cash or In-kind Match** – Applicants must indicate a cash or in-kind match from government, agency, or other 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.

Three examples of how to calculate cash match are:

- $100\% \text{ of Total Project Costs minus } (-) \text{ percent of match required equals } (=) \text{ percent CIP will pay. (Example: } \$1,000 - \$250 = \$750)$
  - $\text{Amount of CIP funds requested divided by percent CIP can pay} = \text{Total Project Cost. (Example: } \$750 \div 75\% = \$1,000)$
  - $\text{Total Project Cost multiplied by percent of match required} = \text{Total Match Required. (Example: } \$1,000 \times 25\% = \$250)$
- d. **Ongoing and Meaningful Collaboration** – All CIP funded programs must include a process for on-going and meaningful collaboration with CIP and the other stakeholders in the community that impact child protection courts. Applicants must avoid any risk of *ex parte* communications on particular matters before a court in implementing this requirement.

- e. **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.
- f. **Use of Program Income** - Applicants may use funds received through program income to fulfill the matching funds requirement, if applicable.
- g. **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
- h. **Disclosure** – Applicants must disclose if any members of the Task Force on Foster Care or its successor entity serves on a managing board, advisory board or is retained for fee beyond reimbursement of actual expenses to participate in funded activities.
- i. **Grant Officials** - Each grant must have the following designated to serve as grant officials:
  - i. Program director. This person must be the officer or employee responsible for program operation, monitoring or implementation of the court improvement and who will serve as the point-of-contact regarding the program's day-to-day operations.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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 program director and the authorized official may be the same person. The financial officer may not serve as the program director or the authorized official.
- j. **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.
- k. **Program Measures** – All applications must include clear performance measures. Submissions involving technology must have clear measurable deliverables in addition to performance measures. If the application does not have clear performance measures (and deliverables for technology requests) CIP may refuse to fund the proposal or require clear measures, or deliverables in any potential offer to fund.
- l. **Reports** – CIP requires quarterly fiscal and program reports on forms provided by CIP. CIP may require some programs to provide a follow-up report outside of the grant period and OMB requirements.
- m. **Technology Standards** – Proposals which include purchase of information technology products must document how the projects meet technology standards adopted by the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) and Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT) as applicable. If no standards are available from DIR or JCIT, then the applicant must meet commonly accepted technology standards such as Open Data Base Compliant (ODBC), Transmission

Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) or National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) as applicable.

- n. **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.
- o. **Dual Use** – Some court improvement activities are intricately woven into larger processes or activities. If an applicant applies for a program that may be considered part of a larger program, the applicant must provide documentation and rationale and establish a basis of costs to determine the portion of a program/project attributable to court improvement. (Example... a training event that is aimed at training attorneys or judges, but only focuses on child abuse and neglect or other court improvement topics 2 hours out of 8 hours of training may only receive CIP funding of 25%).
- p. **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.
- q. **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.
- r. **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.
- s. **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.
- t. **Curriculum Approval** – Training events funded with CIP grants must be approved in advance by the CIP Training Committee. Curriculum for any training event must be developed in collaboration with DFPS and CIP and approved by the CIP Training Committee. The curriculum should be submitted at least 120 days prior to the event.
- u. **Evaluation Requirements** -- Subgrantees must submit an example of the evaluation tool the subgrantee intends to use to demonstrate that the expenditure will result in tangible, measurable, time-specific outcomes for children that will increase safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.

### **Instructions for Writing the Full Application**

If the Grant Administrator provides notice to proceed with application then the applicant completes the application. Each application must contain the following elements:

1. **Program Issue or Problem** – Describe the issue or problem the proposed activity is intended to improve or solve. Applicant should be able to provide information on the issue or data to support that the problem exists.

2. **Program Objective** – Develop clear targets for action that the program will accomplish. Answer why the program will solve the problem stated above.
  - i. Objectives should be in context to the program in the proposal and related to the funds requested.
  - ii. A narrative that describes how the proposed project will help courts improve outcomes for children in terms of safety, permanency and well-being.
  - iii. Objectives should be time/date specific and are measurable.
3. **Activities** - Describe the specific activity the applicant will conduct if funded.
  - i. This section should include detailed instructions of step by step procedures that will take place to perform the program and the resources needed to complete each task. The applicant's plan for the funding should be clear to readers unfamiliar with local conditions.
  - ii. Include startup tasks to begin and the operational program activities that staff will have to perform to implement the program.
  - iii. Identify stakeholders that will provide collaboration and the timeframes where this will take place.
  - iv. Provide justification related to effectiveness and/or economy of the method proposed.
  - v. Describe whether the existing staff and/or contractors will perform tasks, reports, etc., or if new persons will need to be hired.
  - vi. Include a description of the multi-disciplinary, regional, or multi-county partnerships engaged in the application for funding. Agreements among multiple applicants may be formal (in the form of Memoranda of Understanding obligating resources) or informal (letters of commitment to support program or use services provided by the grant funded activities in each area).
4. **Method of Evaluation** – The evaluation provides meaning to the program objectives. The measure of success is determined by the attainment of the goals and objectives of the proposed activity. Describe the method by which milestones, accomplishments, and timelines will be tracked and recorded. State which party within the organization will be responsible for the evaluation component of the project. Provide a narrative that describes how the proposed project will result in measurable, tangible, and time-specific outcomes for children.
  - i. The evaluation must measure both the progress you make toward implementing the grant funded activity and the effect of the program once it is in operation.
  - ii. The evaluation must identify the manner in which the measures will be recorded for reports.
  - iii. Describe how evaluations are in context and impact other local processes, when applicable. This description may be both fiscal and programmatic.
5. **Future Funding**- Include information on how the proposed activity fits into the applicants long-term financial planning and systems.
6. **Budget – (Narrative required)** Applicants will submit a budget form. Budgets must clearly state the costs of executing the program. Budget categories are Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, Construction, and Other.
  - i. Include all costs necessary to implement the proposed activity.
  - ii. Provide a narrative to justify all budgeted expenses. This narrative must correspond to the activities sections.
  - iii. Identify in the budget and narrative the start-up costs or non-reoccurring for continued grants.

- iv. Indicate whether applicant or other sources will provide direct cash payments or in-kind contributions.

**Letters of Support and Agency Brochures** - Additional letters of support, agreements, brochures or other documents in support of the application may be submitted with the application. Please limit the additional documents to meet the information requirements of this RFA.

## **Review & Selection**

- a) **Review criteria** - CIP staff will review each grant in relation to the Strategic Plans submitted to ACF.
- b) **Past performance** - CIP will review subgrantees performance, implementation, and evaluation of past grants.
- c) **Final Selection** - The Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care, or its successor entity will make the final decision about which projects will receive CIP funding. CIP may recommend to the Task Force or its successor entity that a project be funded from a different grant than the one chosen by the applicant, or may recommend an award that is a combination of grant funds. CIP may also recommend that the Task Force or its successor entity select and award programs that reflect geographic diversity, demographic diversity, and/or distinctive program elements

## **General Provisions**

- a. **Target Grants** -The advance review of the ISA assists CIP in providing feedback to applicants and assists the applicants in knowing which programs best meet CIP's strategic plan elements. An invitation to submit a full application does not guarantee funding by CIP.
- b. **Timeframe for Expenses** - No expenses are allowed outside of the period specified in the Statement of Grant Award.
- c. **Program Related Costs for These Grants** - Only costs directly related to court improvement and the court outcomes of safety, permanency, and well being for children are allowable. See OMB Circulars A-87 and A-110 for full details of allowable costs.
- d. **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.)
- e. **Funds Availability** - All commitments are subject to availability of funds.
- f. **Awards** - Publishing this RFA does not obligate CIP to fund any programs.
- g. **Partial Funding** - CIP may recommend funding for all or any portion of a program submitted in the application.
- h. **Substitution** - CIP may recommend alternative funding sources, special conditions or alternative program elements in response to submitted applications.
- i. **Future Funding on Continued Projects** - CIP can only 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.

- j. **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 Task Force on Foster Care or its successor entity based on the status of the program.





\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that CIP funds expended must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the objectives of the program for which funding is sought.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that CIP funds are paid on a reimbursement basis and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that funding is subject to approval by the Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care and its Subcommittees.

Requestor Contact Information:

Attachment B  
**COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**  
**FY2008 Grants**  
*Requests for Applications (RFA)*  
August 24, 2007

### Application

Grant Fund Category Requested:  New  Continued

**Subgrantee**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Requestor is designated as a(n):

- State Agency  Non-Profit Organization  
 Unit of Local Government  Educational Institution  
 Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

Program Type Requested:  Basic Program  Data  Training

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Program Issue or Problem: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Program Objective: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Activities: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Method of Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Future Funding: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Budget Narrative (Include information on match): \_\_\_\_\_

**Budget**

Texas CIP Grant		Requested			
		Total Program	Amount of CIP Funds Requested	Cash Match	In-Kind Match
a	Personnel				
b	Fringe Benefits				
c	Travel				
d	Equipment				
e	Supplies				
f.	Contractual				
g	Construction				
h	Other				
i	<b>Total Direct Charges (sum a-h)</b>				
j	Indirect Charges				
k	<b>Totals</b>				

**Requested Grant Period:** The Grant becomes effective \_\_\_\_\_, and ends \_\_\_\_\_ unless terminated or otherwise modified.

**Amount Requested:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant must initial each of the following:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that CIP grants awarded to a governmental entity are governed by OMB Circular A-87 and that CIP grants awarded to a non profit organization are governed by OMB Circular A-110.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that CIP funds expended must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the objectives of the program for which funding is sought.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that CIP funds are paid on a reimbursement basis and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that funding is subject to approval by the Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care or its successor entity.

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant understands that funding must involve meaningful and on-going collaboration of local or statewide stakeholders.



Attachment D

**Sample Required Resolution  
DO NOT USE AS IS  
COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, under the provisions of the Court Improvement Program, applicants are eligible to receive grants from The Supreme Court of Texas Court Improvement Program to provide court improvements in child protection cases in counties; and

WHEREAS, this grant program will assist courts in the implementation and the improvement of outcomes of safety, well-being, and permanence for children; and

WHEREAS, County Commissioners Court/ Agency Board/ State Agency or Institution Director has agreed that in the event of loss or misuse of the funds, County Commissioners Court/ Agency Board/ State Agency or Institution Director assures that the funds will be returned in full to the Court Improvement Program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED and ordered that the **TITLE OF OFFICIAL DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT / AGENCY BOARD / STATE AGENCY OR INSTITUTION DIRECTOR** of this applicant is designated as the Authorized Official to apply for, accept, decline, modify, or cancel the grant application for the Court Improvement Grant Program and all other necessary documents to accept said grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **TITLE OF OFFICIAL DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT / AGENCY BOARD / STATE AGENCY OR INSTITUTION DIRECTOR** is designated as the Program Director for this grant and the **TITLE OF OFFICIAL DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT/ AGENCY BOARD / STATE AGENCY OR INSTITUTION DIRECTOR** is designated as the Financial Officer for this grant.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007.

Sample \_\_\_\_\_  
County Judge

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Clerk or Notary  
SAMPLE — Do not use this form as is  
- SAMPLE -