

Questions for Tribal Consultation on the Tribal Court Improvement Program

The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Public Law 112-34), which was signed into law on September 30, 2011, creates a new Tribal Court Improvement Program (Tribal CIP). The Tribal CIP provides tribal courts with the opportunity to compete for grants to assess and improve how they handle child welfare proceedings in order to ensure children's safety, permanence, and well-being.

The law allocates one million dollars annually for each of fiscal years 2012 – 2016 for competitive grants. Eligible applicants are the highest courts of Indian tribes or tribal consortia that: (1) are operating an approved title IV–E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Program; (2) have been awarded a tribal implementation grant (indicating that they are seeking to implement a title IV–E plan); or (3) have a court responsible for proceedings related to foster care or adoption.

Given the size of the allocation (one million dollars annually for five years) and the requirement that awards be made on a competitive basis:

1. What is the maximum number of grants that you think the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) should make?
2. In your opinion, what should be the minimum annual grant amounts awarded per tribe and what should be the maximum annual grant amount awarded per tribe? Please share the reasons for your recommendations.
3. In your opinion, what is the appropriate length of time for the project period for the grants (two, three, four or five years) before the grants are recompeted? Please share the reasons for your recommendation.
4. Do you foresee any challenges or obstacles to tribal courts applying for grants directly? (The law indicates that the applicant is required to be the highest court of appeals for tribes or tribal consortia).
5. Do you foresee any unique challenges or obstacles to tribal courts administering the grants?
6. Are there any other suggestions or concerns that you feel it is important that ACF take into consideration in implementing this new program?