


To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: Independent Living Innovation Grant Opportunity for Counties and Tribes

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform counties and tribes of an opportunity to pursue innovative independent living projects at the local level. DCF will provide one-time funding to support efforts by counties and tribes to implement a project or practice that they would not be able to accomplish without seed money.

All counties and tribes are eligible to apply.

BACKGROUND

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 designates funds to improve outcomes for youth as they transition from out-of-home care to adulthood. DCF is permitted to spend these funds over a two-year period and allocate funds to contracted partners serving youth within the domains of independent living (those domains outlined here: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/independentliving>) to increase youth self-sufficiency and success following their transition from care.

DCF currently has access to one-time funding that can be used to support innovative projects or practices designed to improve independent living services and youth outcomes. As a result, DCF has created an application process to award Independent Living Innovation Grants and invites counties and tribes already receiving DCF funds to apply.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

The attached application packet includes complete information about how to apply for a grant. Counties and tribes may apply for an award totaling \$150,000-\$300,000 in one of four topic areas: Employment, Transportation, Permanent Connections or System Improvements. These grant awards must be spent between July 1, 2018 and December 31, 2019, and all applications must include a sustainability plan which explains how the project will continue beyond that timeframe. Counties and tribes are permitted to partner with another county, tribe, or nonprofit, but a county/tribe receiving DCF funds must be the lead

fiscal agent.

The attachment also details the required elements for each topic area, questions that must be completed for the chosen topic, and the application and grant processes and timelines.

Complete applications must be emailed to DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov no later than 5pm on April 30, 2018.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Independent Living Policy Coordinator
Bureau of Youth Services
(608) 422-6990
DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

ATTACHMENT: Independent Living Innovation Grants Application Packet

March 1, 2018

Dear County and Tribe Human and Social Services Directors:

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) invites applicants for an Independent Living Innovation Grant that will support local efforts to develop and implement innovative independent living projects and practices. This is a one-time funding opportunity and grants must be spent by December 31, 2019. Counties or tribes may apply for between \$150,000 and \$300,000 in funding in one of four provided domains.

The attached application packet specifies the grant requirements, including information on each of the four topic areas. Projects must contribute to the ongoing improvement and success of independent living service provision. In addition to a completed application and responses to the required questions, all applicants must also submit a sustainability plan that explains how the project will continue beyond the life of the grant.

All applications must be completed and submitted to Kelsey Hill via DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov no later than **5pm on April 30, 2018**. An optional conference call will be held on March 21, 2018 from 10am-11am to answer any questions about the grant opportunity or application process. The call-in number is 1-877-820-7831 and the access code is 166446#.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your commitment and efforts to help youth in Wisconsin thrive.

Sincerely,



Fredi-Ellen Bove
Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence

cc: John Elliott
Wendy Henderson

Independent Living Innovation Grants Information and Application Instructions

Background and Purpose

One-time independent living funding is being awarded via a competitive grant process for the purpose of supporting counties and tribes to implement a new project or practice that they would not otherwise be able to accomplish without seed money. Priority will be given to projects serving youth in out-of-home care ages 14-21. DCF anticipates contracting for 5-7 awards ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 grants to encourage the development of new projects or practices. By presenting and sharing information with other agencies, these projects will have an even broader impact. All counties and tribes (hereafter referred to as “agencies”) are eligible to apply.

Projects or practices that require start-up funds, but can then be sustained with other existing sources of funding, are appropriate for these grants. Because this funding is time limited, agencies must explain as part of the application process how their projects will be sustained beyond the life of the grant.

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 designates funds to improve outcomes for youth as they transition from out-of-home care to adulthood. The project areas described in the following pages reflect key areas of the [Chafee Act](#) and [DCF Youth Services Framework](#) (hereafter referred to as “Framework”) by targeting some of the significant barriers youth in out-of-home care face. We recommend that applicants refer to the Chafee Act and Framework when crafting their applications. Applicants should explain how their proposed project will further refine the delivery of independent living services and supports to eligible Wisconsin youth. All youth served by the proposed project must be eligible for independent living services according to the Chafee Act criteria.

Topic Areas for Projects

1. Employment

Research has found that having at least one work experience by the age of 16 increases the likelihood that a youth will be successful in the workforce as an adult. It is crucial to provide youth in out-of-home care the opportunities to learn about different career options and how they relate to educational goals; gain employment experience; develop job readiness skills; and secure strong, positive professional references for future employment.

Projects proposed in this area must include an emphasis on paid youth work experience and may consist of the following elements: prioritization of youth in out-of-home care for employment opportunities; exposure of youth to a diversity of employment options, job positions, and fields; mentoring or shadowing opportunities; and/or soft skill development. The work may be paid via hourly compensation or a stipend.

For example, an agency may partner with a community organization to provide a job readiness and immersion program that includes skill development, job readiness, and job shadowing opportunities and exposure to a number of different professions to orient youth to a range of job options.

Thrive: Youth are served in a way that builds on strengths, creates self-efficacy, and moves them towards the goals that they have chosen for themselves. This includes celebrating the unique interests and talents of each individual, and encouraging connections to caring adults. The opportunity to thrive includes meaningful work and is accessible in the context of safe relationships, community, and home environments.

2. Permanent Connections

Having at least one positive, permanent adult connection promotes secure attachment and positive social bonds for a youth. Additionally, being engaged with a community creates a sense of belonging and self-identification. This is especially true for youth who have been in foster care – it is crucial to help develop their connections to role models, peers, and natural supports beyond their involvement in the child welfare system.

The intent of providing funding in this area is for agencies to develop creative ways to identify, develop, and sustain positive permanent adult connections for youth in out-of-home care. Projects proposed in this area must include the following elements: connecting with youth at their level (“meeting youth where they are”) by considering such things as personality, cognitive functioning, and goals; fostering a diverse cohort of potential connections to allow youth to establish bonds according to their strengths, needs, interests, etc.; and identifying and facilitating connections outside of the child welfare system.

For example, a project in this area may focus on identifying and preserving or reestablishing youth’s relationships with supportive individuals/informal supports to improve comfort with, access to, and overall quality of those connections. Another project may leverage existing community organizations and mentorship opportunities (e.g. nonprofits, faith-based organizations, community centers) to prioritize pairing volunteers with youth in out-of-home care and the unique circumstances they face. This may be done in person and/or may use modern technology to establish a network of virtual success coaches, who are available to youth via text, email, and/or a phone application. Applicants should be aware that it is permissible to propose projects that involve collaborations with faith-based organizations.

3. Driving and Transportation

Learning to drive is a key milestone for adolescents and having safe, reliable access to transportation is central to getting to work, school, appointments, and other obligations in a timely manner. Youth in out-of-home care face challenges to learning how to drive and gaining access to a reliable and affordable vehicle. This includes lacking someone with whom to practice driving skills, lacking consistent access to a vehicle, and being unable to afford the costs associated with car ownership, including down payments, gas, and insurance. Foster parents and group homes are often unable or unwilling to add youth to their insurance. The lack of access to a car is especially problematic in areas without widespread public transportation options.

The intent of providing funding in this area is for agencies to identify and implement ways to reduce transportation barriers facing youth in out-of-home care. Projects in this area may include the following elements: increased youth access to driving practice, reduced insurance premiums associated with adding an adolescent to a plan for the adults with whom youth live, and/or increased access to affordable and reliable vehicles or alternate transportation options.

For example, an agency may partner with mentors or community organizations to facilitate driving practice opportunities, subsidize higher insurance premiums associated with adding an adolescent on a plan (e.g. finance the monetary difference between an existing plan and what it costs to add a youth in out-of-home care), or coordinate arrangements to make reliable vehicles more easily accessible to youth in out-of-home care by way of special promotions or subsidized vehicle purchases.

4. System Improvements

The area of Independent Living and the interventions shown to benefit youth in out-of-home care and their transition to self-sufficiency are evolving. There is increased understanding of the best practices for working with and preparing these youth – including having staff well-trained in trauma-informed principles and youth and family engagement; pursuing individualized and inclusive service planning and provision; and “meeting

youth where they are” by acknowledging their comprehension level, comfort level, and communication style and how those shape their interactions with the people and situations around them.

Projects in this area may include the following elements: the purchase, development, and/or implementation of new curricula; staff trainings on best practices, trauma-informed principles, quality case management, effective youth and family engagement, etc.; and/or the purchase or development of new evidence-based/informed resources to better connect, engage, and support youth in out-of-home care. *Each of these individual or collective investments must contribute to the long-term improvement and success of independent living service provision.*

For example, an agency may revamp the ways by which it provides care and case management to youth in out-of-home care by having a structured approach that prioritizes youth empowerment and self-direction. One way this may be done is by training staff in quality case management, including the purchase of necessary tools or guides. Another project may be to build a technological platform to assess youth strengths and needs; streamline communication between youth, supportive staff, and permanent connections; help the youth identify and develop goals to individualize planning; and track youth progress.

What will my agency be required to do if we receive a grant?

Agencies will be required to:

- Submit a detailed project plan and budget within two weeks of award notification;
- Report on the progress of the project and use of the funds every six months;
- Participate in periodic grantee conference calls and site visits;
- Upon request, present the project to other agencies and stakeholders; and
- Participate in a half-day summit at the conclusion of the grant to present on the project and share lessons learned with other interested agencies and stakeholders.

Can my agency apply in partnership with another agency?

Agencies may apply in partnership with other agencies (including nonprofits or Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) in addition to another tribe(s) or county(ies)) by submitting one application with one or more partners listed. One county or tribe must be identified as the lead agency and fiscal agent. That agency must currently receive funds from DCF.

What is the timeline for award and use of funds?

Successful applicants will be notified in May 2018, with an anticipated contract start date of July 1, 2018. The funds must be used by December 31, 2019.

Application Instructions:

- An agency may apply for one grant only.
- Complete the set of questions corresponding to the topic area of your proposed project.
- Limit your response to five single-spaced pages. Use a minimum of 11 pt. font with 1 inch margins.
- Please label your responses to indicate which question and sub-question is being addressed.

Completed applications must be submitted **by 5pm on April 30, 2018**, to Kelsey Hill at DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

An optional conference call will be held on March 21, 2018 from 10-11AM to answer any questions. The call-in number is 1-877-820-7831, and the passcode is 166446#.

Independent Living Innovation Grant Application

Lead agency:			
If applying in partnership, please list the partnering agency(ies):			
Agency mailing address:			
	<i>Street</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Zip code</i>
Contact person for this proposal:			
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	
Contact information for point of contact:			
	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone</i>	

List the amount of money for which you are applying (between \$150,000 and \$300,000):

Indicate which topic area your project addresses (choose only one):

- Employment (Questions on p.6)
- Permanent Connections (Questions on p.7)
- Driving and Transportation (Questions on p.8)
- System Improvements (Questions on p.9)

Complete the set of questions that correspond to the area under which your project fits. **You must pick only one.** Limit your response to five single-spaced pages. Use a minimum of 11 pt. font with 1 inch margins. Label your responses to indicate which question and sub-question is being addressed.

“The work of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families is guided by the Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice that continually aligns what we do with how and why we do our work, and provides a vision for quality services. The system strives to engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections to supports in their community and tribes and bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.”

Employment Questions

1. Describe your proposed project. This should include, at a minimum:
 - a. The overall goal of the project and the general outcomes sought;
 - b. The target population the project will serve;
 - c. The key activities or elements of the project;
 - d. How the activities or elements will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
 - e. An overview of how you will use the level of funding you are seeking (\$150,000 – \$300,000) (you do not need to include a detailed budget at this point).

2. Describe how your proposed project meets the required elements of an Employment project. Specifically, describe how it will emphasize paid youth work experience and:
 - a. Prioritize youth in out-of-home care for employment opportunities;
 - b. Provide mentoring components;
 - c. Provide shadowing opportunities; and/or
 - d. Facilitate soft skill development.

3. List your key collaborators and the roles they will serve.

4. Describe how agency leadership and/or project partners will sustain the project beyond the term of the grant. Include the anticipated source(s) of funding for the project.

Permanent Connections Questions

1. Describe your proposed project. This should include, at a minimum:
 - a. The overall goal of the project and the general outcomes sought;
 - b. The target population the project will serve;
 - c. The key activities or elements of the project;
 - d. How the activities or elements will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
 - e. An overview of how you will use the level of funding you are seeking (\$150,000 – \$300,000) (you do not need to include a detailed budget at this point).
2. Describe how your proposed project meets the required elements of a Permanent Connections project. Specifically, describe how it will:
 - a. “Meet a youth where they are” and establish connections according to what is important to them;
 - b. Primarily identify and facilitate connections outside of the child welfare system, including natural supports; and
 - c. If incorporating a mentoring component, facilitate access to individuals with diverse backgrounds that help foster deeper connections and allow for personalized bonds.
3. List your key collaborators and the roles they will serve.
4. Describe how agency leadership and/or project partners will sustain the project beyond the term of the grant. Include the anticipated source(s) of funding for the project.

Driving and Transportation Questions

1. Describe your proposed project. This should include, at a minimum:
 - a. The overall goal of the project and the general outcomes sought;
 - b. The target population the project will serve;
 - c. The key activities or elements of the project;
 - d. How the activities or elements will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
 - e. An overview of how you will use the level of funding you are seeking (\$150,000 – \$300,000) (you do not need to include a detailed budget at this point).
2. Describe how your proposed project meets the required elements of a Driving and Transportation project. Specifically, describe how it will:
 - a. Increase access to driving practice opportunities for youth in out-of-home care;
 - b. Alleviate higher insurance premiums associated with adding an adolescent to a plan; and/or
 - c. Increase access to affordable and reliable vehicles or alternate transportation options.
3. List your key collaborators and the roles they will serve.
4. Describe how agency leadership and/or project partners will sustain the project beyond the term of the grant. Include the anticipated source(s) of funding for the project.

System Improvement Questions

1. Describe your proposed project. This should include, at a minimum:
 - a. The overall goal of the project and the general outcomes sought;
 - b. The target population the project will serve;
 - c. The key activities or elements of the project;
 - d. How the activities or elements will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
 - e. An overview of how you will use the level of funding you are seeking (\$150,000 – \$300,000) (you do not need to include a detailed budget at this point).

2. Describe how your proposed project meets the required elements of a System Improvements project. Specifically, describe how it will include:
 - a. The purchase, development, and/or implementation of new curricula;
 - b. Staff trainings; and/or
 - c. The purchase or development of new evidence-based/informed resources to better connect, engage, and support youth in out-of-home care.

3. List your key collaborators and the roles they will serve.

4. Describe how agency leadership and/or project partners will sustain the project beyond the term of the grant. Include the anticipated source(s) of funding for the project.

**Eligibility for an Independent Living Innovation Grant requires consent to the criteria below.
Please check each box to acknowledge your acceptance of these terms.**

- I agree to commit the time of the appropriate team and other necessary staff to present to other agencies as required.

- I agree to participate in project evaluation activities.

- I have reviewed and approved the content of this application.

Please sign and date below.

Agency Authority

Date