

support the infrastructure of the RCHSQ Consortium.

Minimum Requirements for Project Design: This is a five-year cooperative agreement project in which substantial Federal involvement is anticipated. The specific respective responsibilities of Federal staff and the awardee will be negotiated prior to the cooperative agreement award. In order to successfully compete for an award under this announcement, each RCHSQ applicant must describe an overall research and organizational plan for the requested period of support as outlined below:

1. Research Plan

Each RCHSQ applicant must propose a research workplan which outlines a cohesive and parsimonious set of innovative theory-driven *site-specific* and *cross-cutting* research questions which address the five goals of the RCHSQs. For example, the fourth goal of the RCHSQs is to "explore linkages among program practices, program quality measures, program performance measures, and observable outcomes for children and families". Examples of several research questions addressing this goal might be: What are the relationships among established quality indicators, program performance measures, and child and family outcomes, in each Head Start component area? Which measures of quality are associated with which performance measures and outcomes? Are there synergistic effects of program quality? Are there aspects of program quality that cut across component areas?

These illustrative research questions could be addressed within the site-specific workplan, with quality indicators and outcome measures unique to that Center, and/or within the cross-cutting workplan, with standardized measures of quality and outcomes proposed for use across RCHSQs to examine if the outcomes are the same for different Head Start programs serving children and families from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. Within its proposal, each applicant is expected to propose a list of research questions for both its site-specific research projects and those that may be addressed by the Consortium as a whole. Given the preliminary nature of the proposed cross-cutting research projects, it is expected that the final cross-cutting workplan for the Consortium will be developed based upon the input received from the members of the Steering Committee and participating Head Start programs before it is submitted for final approval by ACYF.

Applicants should justify the selected site-specific and cross-cutting research questions proposed in their application on the basis of the significance of the Head Start quality issues to be addressed, the current state of scientific knowledge, the feasibility of doing research in the designated area(s) (e.g. the availability of measurement instruments, populations to study, etc.), the applicant's experience conducting research in the proposed areas of investigation, and the potential impact of the research on the improvement of Head Start services for children and their families from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

For each proposed site-specific and cross-cutting study, the applicant should include a brief review and synthesis of the relevant literature and existing scientific knowledge (including their current work in that area); the objectives and significance of the proposed research; research design parameters; proposed study samples; and the timetable for project implementation.

Research workplans for all Research Centers on Head Start Quality must adhere to the following:

a. All applicants must describe the experience of their proposed research staff in conducting collaborative research efforts with Head Start or other community service organizations which serve children and families from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. These descriptions of previous collaborative research efforts should highlight the studies' methodologies, including the research designs, description and sizes of samples, main data collection instruments and strategies, statistical analyses employed, and major findings and publications.

b. All applicants must provide Curriculum Vitae, a statement of relevant current and pending research, training, and service grant and contract support, as well as a letter of commitment, for all relevant Center and Head Start personnel as an appendix.

c. All applicants must provide a listing of the percentage of time that all relevant RCHSQ and Head Start personnel would devote to specific Center-related research duties as an appendix.

d. All applicants must describe the characteristics of the community in which participating Head Start programs are located as well as the characteristics of the currently enrolled Head Start population.

2. Organizational Plan

Each Head Start RCHSQ applicant must outline an overall organizational

plan which describes its proposed administrative organization, including its relationship to the participating Head Start grantees. Relationships with other entities (e.g., the local School Board, State Public Health and Mental Health systems) should also be described. The applicant must submit (as an appendix to the application) a letter of agreement signed by the responsible officer of each associated organization (including all participating Head Start grantees and other members of the research planning team), stating that cooperation, services, or other relevant assistance would be available on a continuing basis and at what level such support would be available. Appropriate clearances from each host institution must be submitted which state that the proposed research meets that institution's research review requirements (e.g., Institutional Review Board responsible for activities involving human subjects as provided for under Department of Health and Human Services policy (45 CFR part 46, 42 U.S.C. 289)).

Organizational plans for all Head Start RCHSQ applications must adhere to the following:

a. The Principal Investigator must serve as Director of the Head Start RCHSQ and provide scientific leadership by devoting a significant portion of his/her time to the Center, including time spent on RCHSQ research projects. The Center Director must be responsible for the planning, coordination, and efficient operation of the Center program, the preparation of its budget, and the control of expenditures, staff appointments, and space allocation. Another individual may be assigned responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the Center.

b. Head Start RCHSQs should be multidisciplinary in nature, and include investigators from such disciplines as education, psychology, psychiatry, pediatrics, social work, nursing, epidemiology, statistics, economics, sociology, and public health.

c. Applicants must describe how the research planning team would be assembled, including the specific roles which Head Start staff and parents as well as community leaders would play in the planning and formal approval of all research projects.

d. The applicant must identify any federally funded demonstration projects in which the affiliated Head Start grantees are participating (e.g., the Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP), the Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration).

e. The applicant must provide assurances that the Head Start RCHSQ Director would serve as a member of the