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**To:** Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Grant Recipients

**Subject:** Opportunities for Tribal MIECHV Grant Recipient Participation in MIECHV-Funded Research and Evaluation Activities

**References:** Title V, Section 511 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 711)

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to outline the flexibilities for Tribal MIECHV grant recipients related to participation in MIECHV-funded research and evaluation activities. This IM identifies opportunities and activities that constitute participation and clarifies allowable uses of grant funds for these purposes.

## Background

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Tribal MIECHV Program is committed to a learning orientation that is focused on growth and improvement – for individual grant recipients and the Tribal MIECHV Program as a whole. ACF’s respect for Tribal sovereignty, commitment to building data capacity, and support for continuous learning have shaped Tribal MIECHV’s approach to data, research, and evaluation since the inception of the program. One of the primary goals for the Tribal MIECHV Program has been to expand the evidence base on home visiting in Native populations and to increase the representation of Tribal home visiting programs in broader MIECHV learning by contributing to the *MIECHV Learning Agenda* – a planned approach to learning and improving program performance. (See Appendix for more information about the *MIECHV Learning Agenda*).

Along with the commitment to continuous learning, ACF is committed to following the values and principles of the [Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation with Tribal Communities](#). Addressing the history of harmful, exploitive research in Tribal communities, the Roadmap calls for collaborative, culturally responsive evaluation, systems improvement, and locally guided questions grounded in values such as respect for Tribal sovereignty and knowledge sharing. The Tribal MIECHV Program has grounded its requirements and parameters for research and evaluation activities in the principles of the Roadmap. Through partnership, collaboration, and relationship-building with grant recipients in research and evaluation, ACF has heard from grant recipients how valuable a learning orientation is for Tribal communities,

especially when learning and the environment in which it occurs is strengths-based, community engaged, and flexible to the needs of specific programs and communities.

In addition to their work in performance measurement and continuous quality improvement (CQI), previous cohorts of Tribal MIECHV grant recipients were required to engage in research and evaluation by conducting their own rigorous local evaluations and/or engaging in the community-engaged Multi-Site Implementation Evaluation of Tribal Home Visiting (MUSE). The effort to create community-driven rigorous evaluation has been a valued aspect of the program for Tribal MIECHV recipients, especially as evaluations combined scientific and cultural rigor to ensure evaluation questions were meaningful and of interest to the program, questions were driven by staff and community, and collaboration between Tribal program staff and professionals with research and evaluation experience has increased the capacity of Tribal communities to engage in the work moving forward.

Many other Tribal MIECHV grant recipients have engaged in other [MIECHV-funded research and evaluation projects](#) including Touchpoints for Addressing Substance Use in Home Visiting, Supporting and Strengthening the Home Visiting Workforce (SAS-HV), the Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC), and Supporting Family Economic Well-Being through Home Visiting (HomeEc). These opportunities have elevated Tribal perspectives and voices in the context of broader learning about home visiting program implementation, and increased representation of Tribal programs in these projects.

Tribal MIECHV local evaluations, multi-site evaluations, and grant recipients' engagement with other federal projects have contributed to significant learning both for and about Tribal MIECHV. While both the MUSE study and local evaluations were a positive learning-centered process for programs and communities, ACF heard that these types of research and evaluation activities required significant planning, resources, training, and engagement of staff, sometimes directing staff time and grant funds away from direct implementation of home visiting services. Further, ACF heard that participation in significant research and evaluation projects does not hold relevance and priority to all Tribal MIECHV programs. Finally, ACF was charged with reducing administrative burden associated with the Tribal MIECHV grant as part of the FY 2023 reauthorization of the MIECHV program.

## **Guidance**

In recognition of Tribal sovereignty, the variability in priorities across grant recipients, and legislative goals related to reducing administrative burden, ACF seeks to increase flexibility for Tribal MIECHV grant recipients to participate in research and evaluation activities based on their interest and capacity, rather than as a major grant requirement. Starting in FY 2022, Tribal MIECHV Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) clarified that grant recipients may participate, whenever feasible and where there is interest, in MIECHV-funded research and evaluation activities. ACF is providing flexibilities in how Tribal MIECHV grant recipients participate in research and evaluation activities, with the understanding that the capacity for and interest in participation in research and evaluation may vary across Tribal programs, while also recognizing that there is still a need to build evidence and continue learning about home visiting implementation in Indigenous communities.

These new flexibilities significantly reduce burden associated with previous requirements that were in place and offer grant recipients the ability to determine their participation in research and evaluation activities using grant funds based on needs in their communities. Grant recipients are no longer required to conduct a local evaluation or participate in a federally-led evaluation. Instead, grant recipients may engage in a number of activities related to MIECHV-funded research and evaluation. Grant recipients may also participate in research and evaluation activities on related topics that are not directly funded by MIECHV. The way that individual Tribal MIECHV grant recipients participate in research and evaluation efforts and contribute to broader learning will depend on their priorities, what is feasible, and what they determine is in the best interest of their Tribal communities.

This change represents an opportunity for all Tribal MIECHV grant recipients to participate in research and evaluation activities, as they determine, to ensure representation of Tribal communities and programs in these studies and for the findings to be useful for Tribal home visiting programs. It also presents continued opportunities for grant recipients to engage in professional development opportunities, peer-sharing and bidirectional learning with other programs, and opportunities to elevate Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing.

#### *Examples of Activities*

Tribal MIECHV grant recipients who are actively implementing a home visiting program (i.e., they have an approved Implementation Plan), may participate, whenever feasible and where there is interest, in MIECHV-funded research and evaluation activities. Examples of activities include:

- Participation in any phase of a MIECHV-funded research or evaluation effort
  - Participating in listening sessions, technical workgroups, and engagement sessions with project teams
  - Participating in data collection for a study
  - Participating in data interpretation, providing feedback on written materials, and dissemination of project findings
- Dissemination of information learned from the grant recipient's own data-related activities (e.g., performance measurement, CQI, research, evaluation). This could include presenting at conferences focused on home visiting and/or early childhood in Tribal communities (e.g., Native Children's Research Exchange (NCRE), National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), National Home Visiting Summit, Home Visiting Applied Research Collaborative (HARC)). Other acceptable dissemination activities include writing results for peer-reviewed journal articles or presenting through webinars.

Examples of upcoming or ongoing MIECHV-funded research and evaluation efforts that recipients may engage with include:

- Participating in ongoing Communities of Learning with the [Tribal Early Childhood Research Center](#)

- Becoming a member of the [HARC](#) and participating in member-only research opportunities as they arise
- For those grant recipients who were part of the [Multi-Site Implementation Evaluation of Tribal Home Visiting](#), continuing to participate in the ongoing MUSE research and dissemination review process

Other opportunities to participate in activities will be shared over the Tribal MIECHV grant recipient listserv. There may be opportunities for various Tribal MIECHV grant recipient team members (e.g., Program Directors, supervisors, home visitors) to participate, depending on the specific activity or project.

Grant recipients may also elect to participate in more intensive MIECHV-funded research and evaluation activities that are accompanied by additional resources outside of the Tribal MIECHV grant. An example of this kind of activity is participation in the [Center for Indigenous Research Collaborations and Learning for Home Visiting \(CIRCLE-HV\)](#), which includes funded opportunities for participation in Research-Practice Partnerships (RPPs) and a Cross-Site Study (CSS). While these particular opportunities are now closed, there may be future opportunities available, and grant recipients will be informed.

Grant recipients may also opt to engage in research and evaluation opportunities that are not directly funded by MIECHV, if they are of interest to the recipient. These evaluation opportunities should focus on home visiting or other early childhood initiatives in Indigenous communities. Grant recipients are encouraged to discuss their interest in involvement in a project that is not funded by MIECHV with their Federal Project Officer (FPO).

#### *Use of Grant Funds to Support Participation*

Tribal MIECHV grant recipients are able to use their grant funds for staff time to participate in research and evaluation activities, as well as budget for any travel for activities, should the project not provide travel funds. Grant recipients are also able to use their grant funds for staff time to participate in CIRCLE-HV and other funded research opportunities. Grant recipients may determine which team members participate and at what level of time commitment. It is generally recommended that grant recipients budget for staff involvement for their participation in activities each budget period. Recipients are encouraged to discuss this with their FPO.

ACF understands that some grant recipients may wish to conduct a local evaluation to be able to answer locally defined and community-driven questions of interest. Unlike prior Tribal MIECHV grants, this is no longer required or expected. However, grant recipients who are interested in conducting these activities may direct a small portion of their total budget to these activities, as long as this does not negatively impact the ability to carry out other required grant activities, including maintaining services to families, implementing the approved implementation plan, conducting performance measurement, and engaging in CQI activities. Recipients must keep their FPO informed of their plans and budget accordingly. Grant recipients are welcome to supplement Tribal MIECHV funds with other sources and direct these additional funds towards a local evaluation.

Any revisions to existing budgets to accommodate participation in MIECHV-funded research and evaluation or local evaluation activities must follow the guidance that is noted in Tribal MIECHV cooperative agreements, special clause no. 2, Post-Award Budget Flexibility. Requests for significant budget revisions must be submitted as an amendment in GrantSolutions for prior review and approval. Please note that travel to conferences that have a registration fee will require a budget modification.

Some grant recipients may be interested in taking part in activities before they have an approved Implementation Plan, or at a time that is most feasible for them, including when research and evaluation activities have active opportunities for participation, e.g., when a data collection window for a project is time-limited. This is allowable, and grant recipients should inform their FPOs of their interest and time commitment.

For activities that include compensation (e.g., honoraria for completing a survey or interview or participating on a technical workgroup), grant recipients should check with their organization regarding policies about receiving compensation while already participating in grant-funded activities during their normal business hours.

Grant recipients will report on their participation in MIECHV-funded research and evaluation activities in the Tribal MIECHV Annual Report (Section 4: Update on Contribution to MIECHV Learning Agenda through Participation in Research & Evaluation Projects).

## **Questions**

Please direct inquiries to your Tribal MIECHV FPO in the Office of Early Childhood Development.

/Katie Hamm/

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## Appendix

### *MIECHV Learning Agenda*

Since the advent of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, and in accordance with the MIECHV statute (42 U.S.C. 711(h)(3)), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has carried out a continuous program of research and evaluation activities in order to increase knowledge about the implementation and effectiveness of home visiting programs as implemented in different contexts. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and ACF, the agencies collaborating to implement MIECHV, have developed a formal Learning Agenda (Figure 1) to guide MIECHV's development and use of evidence to inform decision-making and program improvement.

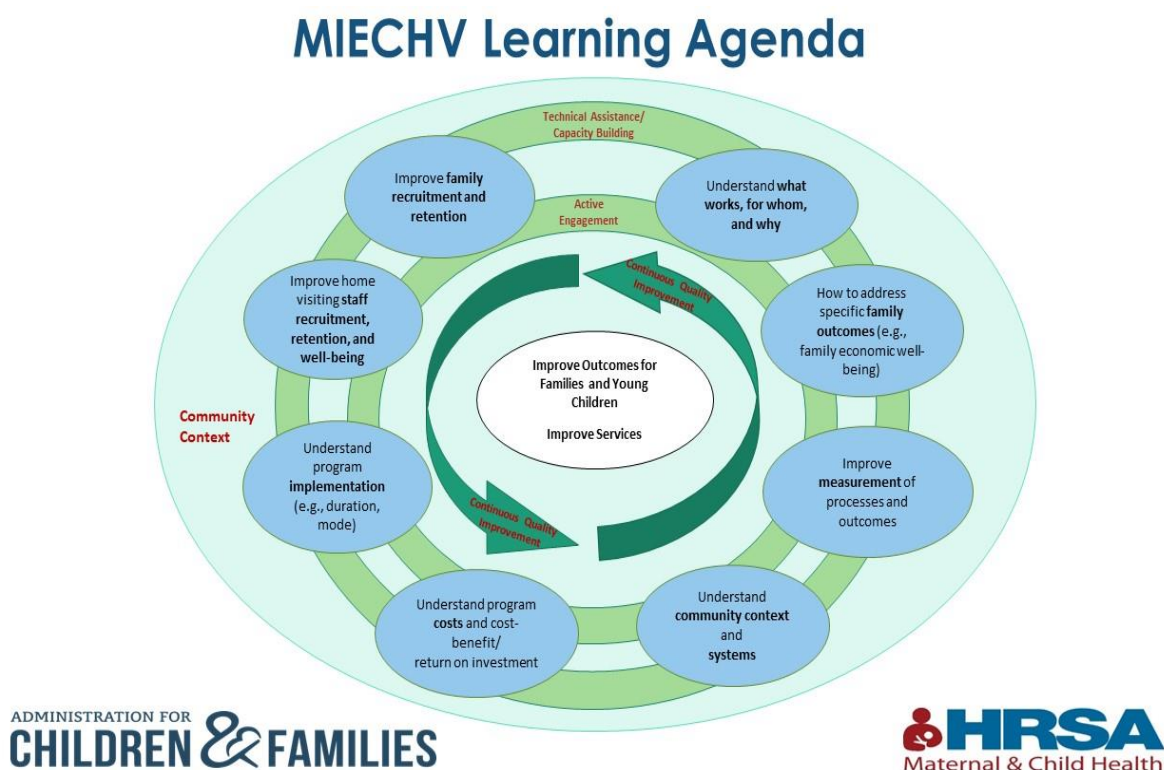


Figure 1: MIECHV Learning Agenda

As defined by the [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) and pursuant to the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Learning Agendas are systematic, evidence-building plans for identifying and addressing priority questions relevant to an agency's programs, policies, and regulations. Learning Agendas involve collaboratively identifying critical questions that, when answered, will help programs be more effective, answering those questions using the most appropriate tools, and then using what was learned to improve the program and to generate new questions that can continue to move the learning agenda forward. Implementing a Learning Agenda approach creates an environment that encourages individuals, programs, and teams to reflect on and learn from their experience and from others. It is a planned approach to learning and improving program performance through evaluation and analysis, and can help staff and

partners build knowledge in a planful way and learn rapidly to enable adaptations and improvements. The MIECHV Learning Agenda aims to utilize all types of data and information generated by the MIECHV Program (e.g., performance measurement data, learnings from CQI efforts, findings from research and evaluation projects) in order to continuously contribute to the improvement of home visiting services and child and family outcomes.