



## **Nomination Guidance and Instructions for the Families Are Stronger Together (FAST): TANF & Child Welfare Partnering for Prevention Learning Community (FAST-LC)**

### **A. Purpose, benefits, and background**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), in partnership with the Children’s Bureau (CB), is pleased to announce the formation of a TANF-Child Welfare Learning Community focused on preventing family involvement in the child welfare system through developing, implementing, and enhancing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-Child Welfare innovations and partnerships. This “**Families Are Stronger Together (FAST): TANF & Child Welfare Partnering for Prevention Learning Community (FAST-LC)**” is a one-year initiative that will involve up to ten state and/or tribal TANF-Child Welfare partnerships. The **FAST-LC** is slated to launch in September 2023 and conclude in September 2024.

Participating in this FAST-LC is an exciting opportunity to be part of a collaborative network of peers working to advance innovative prevention strategies. Teams will:

- ✓ Receive individualized training and technical assistance from dedicated, experienced coaches
- ✓ Participate in regular group learning activities and sessions on shared topics of interest
- ✓ Form relationships with peer programs from whom and with whom you can learn, celebrate successes, and troubleshoot challenges.

ACF has a long and rich history of sponsoring Learning Communities (formerly known as Policy Academies) designed to catalyze TANF program innovation and improvement on topics and practices of importance to the federal government and the field. Most recently, ACF sponsored the “Leveraging America’s Social and Economic Resilience” TANF Learning Community (LASER TLC) which involved six state, three tribal, and two county teams working together to advance program improvement strategies in response to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. You can learn more about the 2021-2023 LASER TLC [here](#).

### **B. Organizing theme**

This FAST-LC will center on **innovative prevention strategies** to mitigate and reduce families’ involvement with the child welfare system through **partnerships between TANF and Child Welfare programs**. Research suggests that even modest economic supports can stabilize families and alleviate or avoid the need for more intensive intervention and involvement of

families in the child welfare system. TANF programs are uniquely positioned to use several different levers at their disposal – including funding, policies, and program practices – to provide these kinds of supports to families.

### **C. What you can expect**

Participating teams will benefit from a robust suite of individualized training, technical assistance, and coaching supports as well as regular opportunities for collaborative learning and sharing with peer teams. Specifically, these supports and opportunities include:

- ✓ Dedicated, experienced, and responsive coaches who will develop a relationship with your team and facilitate your change process over this year-long initiative.
- ✓ One or more onsite visits from your coaches to spend time with your team and key partners in your communities and support your efforts in-person.
- ✓ Capacity building for applying the [Learn, Innovate, Improve \(LI<sup>2</sup>\)](#) framework to guide your innovation efforts and change management.
- ✓ Engaging and responsive training, technical assistance, and learning sessions held on a regular basis for all LC members as well as smaller affinity groups on select topics of interest.
- ✓ Dynamic peer-to-peer learning opportunities in the form of virtual and in-person convenings, learning labs, site exchanges, and/or roundtable discussions.
- ✓ Connections to leading experts, best practices, and research evidence on key topics of interest.

These supports and opportunities are designed to help you achieve your innovation goals through participation in the LC. Your efforts have the potential for impact not only in your state or community, but also for the broader field.

Participating teams will be able to access the above mentioned supports at no cost. Additionally, limited travel reimbursement will be provided to teams so they can play active roles at the in-person FAST-LC events. We expect to hold an initial in-person convening in Washington, D.C., the week of October 16-20, 2023, and a capstone convening in September 2024 (also in Washington, D.C.).

### **D. Eligibility to self-nominate and commitments**

Given the focus of this FAST-LC and the collaboration between OFA and CB at the federal level, all participating teams are required to involve core members from both TANF and Child Welfare. The following entities are eligible to self-nominate the LC:

- State teams composed of representatives from both the TANF and Child Welfare departments/offices.
- Tribal government, agency, or association teams composed of representatives from both the TANF and Child Welfare departments/offices.

Other non-governmental and local partners are encouraged and welcomed to participate in your team's initiative if you are selected, but only state or tribal TANF agencies may self-nominate. The state or tribal TANF-Child Welfare partners will be expected to lead your team's work.

Given the intensive nature of the FAST-LC and the TTA being provided, teams that submit a self-nomination commit to:

- ✓ **Maintain leadership involvement and support** for this effort over the entire year (September 2023 – September 2024)
- ✓ **Prioritize and make progress** on the development and implementation of one or more prevention strategies; this includes creating and carrying out an action plan in partnership with their FAST-LC coaches.
- ✓ **Dedicate at least 6-8 hours per month** to this effort, including but not limited to biweekly team/coaching meetings; participating in working groups to advance progress on an action plan; participating in FAST-LC sponsored in-person events and virtual activities; and hosting/participating in one or more site visits by the coaching team.

Although the FAST-LC will offer a range of opportunities for all participating teams, **most of the work will occur within your own team/agencies with the support of your coaches.**

Coaches can provide guidance, assist with developing and refining your plan, delivering technical assistance, and facilitate access to relevant resources and experts.

## **E. Process for submitting a self-nomination to participate in the FAST-LC**

To nominate your state or tribal team, we ask that you complete the following steps by **Thursday, September 7, 2023, at 6:00pm EDT:**

1. **Submit a Vision Plan** that is no longer than three (3) pages single-spaced using 12-point Times New Roman font. Your Vision Plan should include three sections as outlined below.
  - I. **Innovation vision and goals:** Briefly explain your team’s vision for what you hope to achieve through a TANF-Child Welfare collaboration focused on preventing family involvement in the child welfare system. Share what will be different for your state or community if your vision becomes reality – this might include your initial thinking about long-term outcomes on which you would expect to move the needle. Identify two or three specific goals you hope to accomplish by the conclusion of this FAST-LC (September 2024). This might include key process steps, organizational and practice changes, or other achievements that are aspirational yet realistic within a one-year timeframe. These goals should be linked to and in service of your overall vision.
  - II. **Readiness for change:** Describe your team’s commitment and motivation for developing and implementing innovative prevention strategies to avoid or reduce child welfare system involvement for families. Share how this focus is aligned with your agencies’ priorities and how it will connect to other/related efforts. Describe your organization’s ability to make the vision and goals you propose in Part I happen. Share what will help you be successful, which might include relevant knowledge/skills, internal or external champions, relationships/partnerships, or other factors and resources.
  - III. **Team composition and partners for change:** Each participating site in the FAST-LC is typically led by a core implementation team of 3 to 5 people who are the “owners” and “shepherds” of the work. Describe who will comprise

your core implementation team. Note that this should include representatives from both TANF and Child Welfare in your state or tribe. Identify, if appropriate, other important partners in your state/community who you plan to engage in the work and why they are important for the work.

2. **Submit a signed letter of commitment** confirming executive leadership support (e.g., agency director, secretary, or tribal chairperson) for your state or tribe's participation in this year-long initiative. Please note that, if your state houses TANF and Child Welfare in separate agencies, a letter from each agency director should be submitted.

## **F. Review of self-nominations and selection process**

OFA, CB, and its contractors responsible for organizing and facilitating this FAST-LC will review and score each self-nomination based on responsiveness to the criteria outlined above. Additional factors may also be considered including geographic and jurisdictional diversity, focus areas selected, as well as clarity and reasonableness of the proposed work.

All teams that submit a self-nomination will receive notification about selection in mid-September 2023.

## **G. Additional information and key dates**

An interest webinar will be held on **Thursday, August 10, at 2:00-3:00pm EDT** to provide additional information about the FAST-LC and the self-nomination process as well as to answer live questions. You may register in advance for the interest webinar using the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rdeCtrDwrGtxJxsuQLKq5L8xGhPWH6rJx>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a Zoom link to the join.

**You may request a self-nomination package July 26, and can submit questions at any time to [TANF-CWLearningCommunity@blhtech.com](mailto:TANF-CWLearningCommunity@blhtech.com).**