Call for Applications to Become a Project Site

Release Date: January 8, 2024
Application Due Date: 2-15-24

The Opportunity

The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Analytics (QIC-WA), a project of the Children's Bureau, would like to partner with your agency to:

- Systematically identify and understand your agency's specific workforce challenges
- Implement strategies to strengthen your child welfare workforce, which may in turn enhance the delivery of services to children and families served
- Advance the use of workforce analytics to support data-driven decisions in your agency
- Build data infrastructure and capacity which can support your Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and other reporting initiatives (e.g., CFSR/PIP or APSR)
- Participate in an ongoing peer-learning network with other QIC-WA project sites across the nation that are striving to improve the child welfare workforce, where you can share your ideas and accomplishments, identify factors that are unique to your agency, and problem solve together
- Access capacity building services, resources, and expertise to support the implementation and evaluation of HR data analytics and workforce development interventions
- Receive a summative evaluation report highlighting site-specific implementation and outcome findings, which may be useful to support other agency reporting requirements (e.g. CQI efforts)

Overview

Turnover among child welfare professionals has been an ongoing challenge for decades and continues to disrupt services for families. In recent years child welfare agency directors have reported that it is taking longer to fill vacancies and that the number of people applying for child welfare jobs has declined. Increased vacancy rates place additional stress on the remaining workforce by increasing caseloads and workloads. Furthermore, child welfare professionals have expressed discomfort and frustration with racial inequalities in the child welfare system, and workers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) report experiencing greater everyday discrimination in the workplace than white coworkers. These factors add to the stress of the job and influence the organizational climate. The reason that turnover persists is intertwined with the reason that it matters: the work is complex, and

the stakes are high. The well-being of children and families is directly impacted by disruption among the child welfare workforce, and agency leaders are seeking strategies to stabilize and strengthen the workforce.

The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Analytics (QIC-WA) was established in 2023 to bring tools to public and tribal child welfare agencies that improve the usefulness of workforce data. We are committed to addressing persistent child welfare workforce challenges with data-driven solutions. We believe that agencies that effectively use their workforce data to improve their operations are best suited to support the children in their care. We will work with you to establish a data analytics infrastructure and develop and evaluate a data-driven workforce intervention that best fits your specific challenges and goals.

The QIC-WA strives to meet organizations where they are and empower them to use their own data to determine workforce strategies around topics such as workforce diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI), recruitment, performance, retention, and well-being. Our team is comprised of experts in child welfare workforce, implementation, data analytics and DEI. The QIC-WA is led by University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) Agile Visual Analytics Lab at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, in collaboration with: University of Nebraska–Lincoln Center on Children, Families and the Law; University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Education and Research Programs; the University of Washington School of Social Work's Indigenous Wellness Research Institute; the Michigan Public Health Institute; CLH Strategies & Solutions; Stabio Productions; Penny P Collins Consulting; Mattingly Solutions; and Insights OD Group. The QIC-WA will thoughtfully weave our collective expertise into a designated site team specifically matched to your jurisdiction's needs and capacities.

To identify and evaluate the effectiveness of workforce strategies, the QIC-WA is seeking a total of <u>six</u> public or tribal child welfare agencies/sites interested in workforce analytics and testing evidence-informed workforce strategies. The QIC-WA will partner and provide significant support to the selected sites to use their Human Resources (HR) data to gain insights into their agency functioning and to implement and evaluate the impact of interventions that aim to improve child welfare workforce outcomes. The QIC-WA will use a framework to guide workforce strategy selection, implementation, and evaluation and visualization tools to enhance data utility. We will start by working with selected agencies to assess their HR data to understand root causes and develop a theory of change to guide the selection of a workforce strategy or intervention to implement. Once an intervention is selected, we will work closely with the agency to implement and test the workforce strategy theorized to make a positive impact on the workforce. *We will work with you to build data analytics tools such as dashboards to enhance the agency's ability to make decisions* about the success of the initiative and need for further change or adaptation. **Project duration will vary by site and will range from 2.5 to 4 years.**

This document describes: the project goals of the QIC-WA; applicant eligibility; the benefits of becoming a project site; the QIC-WA's approach to supporting project sites over the course of implementation; requirements and expectations of project sites; and the application process, including site selection. It is our hope that this provides eligible applicants with the sufficient details they need to make a well-informed decision about pursuing this opportunity. ***Note: further details and outreach to Tribal Sites is scheduled to be released in early February. The QIC-WA will provide technical support to Tribes wishing to be considered, using an adapted process and timeline, however, Tribal sites are welcome to apply to either Call for Applications.***

Eligible Applicants

State, territorial, and county public child welfare agencies (from both state-administered and state supervised, county-administered child welfare systems) and Tribes and Tribal Consortia[1] that are currently receiving Title IV-B grant funds administered by the Children's Bureau are eligible to apply. Private agencies, including those receiving public child welfare funding, are not eligible for this opportunity.

QIC-WA Approach

The QIC-WA is dedicated to partnering with sites early in the project development process and continuing those relationships throughout our implementation and evaluation work with the selected sites. Upon selection as a project site, the QIC-WA will assign Workforce, Data Analytics, Implementation, and Evaluation professionals from our team to work with each selected project site. Each QIC-WA site team will be organized to maximize collaboration and support for project sites in the implementation and evaluation of the workforce development project. Our team will work closely with the site's identified Site Implementation Manager (SIM; see role responsibilities in following section) to facilitate all aspects of the project. In doing so, the QIC-WA will perform the following functions:

- Lead project sites in a workforce needs assessment process and use of the results to guide the selection of a workforce intervention or strategy
- Provide implementation and capacity building services to the project sites to support effective implementation of the workforce interventions, including intensive, ongoing support, guidance, coaching, and technical assistance to sites in project implementation, data collection, and evaluation
- Conduct robust site evaluations to assess the implementation, outputs, workforce outcomes, child welfare practice, and child welfare outcomes for the workforce intervention in each of the project sites
- Disseminate learning to target audiences, helping project sites share knowledge gained with local and national stakeholders

Requirements and Expectations of QIC-WA Project Sites

The QIC-WA's approach to project site selection, implementation and evaluation is based on various implementation science frameworks. The requirements and expectations of QIC-WA project sites reflect these frameworks and what research has shown to be essential to successful implementation efforts. We understand the staffing challenges child welfare agencies face and will provide hands-on intensive support to the agency in all aspects of the work for the duration of the project, with the goal of building the agency's long-term capacities. We strive to work "shoulder to shoulder" with agency personnel to jointly accomplish project goals. Agencies should be prepared to devote significant leadership involvement from their child welfare program, HR, training, CQI/data functions.

Establish an Implementation Team Structure. The QIC-WA will provide capacity building services to support sites in establishing an implementation team structure, inclusive of the broader agency, system,

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[1] All tribes that are part of a consortia application need to be recipients of Title IV-B grant funds.

or community, as relevant, to guide the site. The QIC-WA recommends a broad-based set of representatives to serve on the team(s), including professionals representing human resources, civil service, continuous quality improvement and evaluation, training, certification board, child welfare leadership, supervisors, staff, tribal leaders and elders, and community partners. The designated QIC-WA team matched to your site will support the ongoing functioning and operations of this implementation team with an on-site and virtual presence.

Appoint a Site Implementation Manager (SIM). With the hands-on support of the QIC-WA team, the SIM's responsibilities will include:
- finalizing membership of the Implementation Team(s)
- completing a project charter for all teams as necessary
- working with the QIC-WA to develop and monitor progress on the site implementation work plan over the course of the project
- conducting stakeholder meetings as needed
- managing project responsibilities (e.g., mobilizing agency personnel and resources to ensure completion of work plan activities, identifying and neutralizing potential barriers to completion of data dashboard, evaluation or dissemination activities)

Our goal is to build your capacity by working shoulder to shoulder with your identified SIM in all phases of the work.

Appoint a Data Coordinator. The Data Coordinator's responsibilities will include obtaining and transmitting the necessary HR and child and family administrative data files to the QIC-WA; helping process the evaluation through the agency Institutional Review Board (IRB), if applicable; and ensuring new data are collected throughout the project per the agreed upon evaluation plan. You can expect hands-on support from the QIC-WA in all phases of this work.

Execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the QIC-WA. These binding agreements will detail the mutual roles and responsibilities of the lead child welfare agency and QIC-WA, including such aspects as data collection, confidentiality, access to and retention of data, dissemination, anticipated time frames for project milestones, and establishing and managing internal and external stakeholder relationships to ensure successful project implementation and evaluation.

Co-Develop and Execute a Data Sharing Agreement. This agreement will describe required data elements; data transmission processes; data storage; and issues of data protection, confidentiality, security, and publication.

Select and Implement a Workforce Strategy or Intervention. Working closely with the QIC-WA team, each site will engage in a needs assessment process designed to inform the selection of a workforce strategy or intervention that will be the cornerstone of their project's implementation and evaluation activities.

Co-Create and Implement a Workforce Analytics Development Strategy. Each site will work with the QIC-WA team to access relevant workforce data, determine appropriate metrics, and develop workforce analytics insight products that will provide useful information to inform agency decision-making. This may include the development of many different elements of a workforce analytics system, including measurement, data collection and management, analysis, data visualization and dissemination strategies, or building new relationships within agency structures. As with all phases of the work, the

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QIC-WA team is prepared to work shoulder to shoulder with your agency's personnel to accomplish these goals.

Participate in the Evaluation of a Workforce Strategy or Intervention. Each site commits to collaborate with the QIC-WA to build a body of knowledge for comprehensive workforce planning and development. Each project site commits to utilizing the most rigorous evaluation that is appropriate for the type of workforce intervention chosen, given the site's capacity, organizational and community culture. Based on the intervention selected, the project site and evaluation team will co-create an evaluation plan for implementation, and outcome components. Data collection/evaluation activities may include surveys, interviews and focus groups involving staff and agency leaders; submission of child welfare information system data, which may also include linked data to staff and/or other organizational entities, and submission of individual-level workforce data and other relevant workforce metrics.

Participate in a Community of Learning. The six QIC-WA project sites will have multiple opportunities to come together as a learning community, including periodic virtual meetings, and potentially an in-person gathering of site representatives. The QIC-WA will support participants' travel expenses.

Plan for Sustainability. The QIC-WA will work with each site to identify realistic, feasible sustainability goals and build capacity to enable the site to continue the work beyond the term of the project. Sustainability planning will begin early on and will be an integral part of each project throughout.

Engage in Dissemination. The QIC-WA will support each site to develop a site-specific dissemination plan, and share lessons learned, implementation progress, and evaluation findings with local stakeholders. We will also facilitate opportunities to share lessons with other child welfare agencies nationally. Materials to support dissemination may include data analytics shareables (e.g., visualizations and dashboards), webinars, presentations, manuals, or articles.

Financial Resources

The QIC-WA will provide financial support to sites based upon achievement of specific milestones related to the project workplan. Specific amounts will vary per site, based on unique site needs and scope of each project. Examples of potential supports include travel to meetings and conferences, direct payment for consultants identified by the site or QIC-WA as necessary for the intervention, or other costs associated with implementing the selected workforce intervention and data analytics strategies.

Application Process: Timeline and Format

Step 1 – January 18, 2024: Project Site Application Webinar

The QIC-WA team will hold an optional webinar to introduce the project and describe the process for becoming a QIC-WA project site. You can register for a webinar here. The webinar will be recorded and can be viewed from the QIC-WA website (www.qic-wa.org).

- States, Counties, and Territories (Tribes are welcome too):
    - **January 18, 2024, at 11 PT/12 MT/1 CT/2 ET**
    - **Register for the webinar at bit.ly/QICWAAPPREG24**

- Tribe-specific:
    - February date and time TBA on the QIC-WA website

Step 2 – Submitting Questions

Up until February 1, 2024, if applicants have questions, they can be emailed to contact.qic.wa@gmail.com. A *Questions and Answers* document will be updated as needed and posted on the QIC-WA website to provide consistent up-to-date information to all potential applicants.

Step 3 – On or before February 15, 2024: Applications due from public agencies (state, county, territory)

Using the requirements and criteria detailed in this application document, eligible public agency applicants can apply to the QIC-WA until **February 15, 2024 at 11:59pm Pacific Time**. To apply, complete the application form at bit.ly/QICWASITEAPPLICATIONFORM24. *To help you prepare your responses, a complete list of the fields you will be asked to complete, in order that they appear online, is attached as the final page of this Call for Applications*. However, please note that all responses must be submitted online to be considered for this opportunity. ***NOTE: Tribal agencies will have an adapted application process and timelines, to be posted as a separate Tribal Agency announcement on the QIC-WA website in early February.***

Step 4 – Between February 16, 2024, and March 15, 2024: Video meeting interviews conducted with all public agency applicants.

QIC-WA leadership will contact all eligible applicants to schedule a video (Zoom) meeting between QIC-WA representatives and leadership of the public agency, to be held before March 15, 2024. This meeting is critical to the site selection process and as such, it will be expected that attendees will include representatives from agency executive leadership, human resources, and workforce analytics/CQI systems and others whom leadership envisions as critical to the effort (potentially including representatives from management, supervisors, and workers), to fully discuss becoming a QIC-WA project site. The QIC-WA will provide applicants with advance questions to prepare for the meeting and guide each potential site in a transparent conversation about workforce needs, strengths, and interests.

Step 5 – By March 25, 2024: QIC-WA will submit a proposed list of recommended public agency project sites to the Children's Bureau for approval.
Following Children's Bureau approval, selected sites will be invited to join the project. Kickoff activities for public agency sites will begin in April 2024; kickoff activities for tribal sites will begin in June 2024. Sites which are not selected will be informed by May 30th and offered connections to other Children's Bureau funded resources to support their workforce initiatives.

Application Format
To submit an application from a public state, territory or county agency, the QIC-WA requires the following two components:

Cover Letter(s)
State, Territory, or County applicants are required to submit a letter from the Agency's chief executive, consenting to the application and confirming that the agency agrees to allow the QIC-WA access to individual-level HR data and child welfare case level data for evaluation purposes. If the agency's Human

Resources function and data are managed by an agency that is separate from child welfare, the consent of that agency is also required. The cover letter will be uploaded as part of the online application, see application link in the next section below.

Application

Interested applicants are asked to submit a brief application narrative that is responsive to the questions outlined below. The application narrative will be entered online at bit.ly/QICWASITEAPPLICATIONFORM24. *A complete list of the fields you will be asked to complete, in order that they appear online is attached as the final page of this Call for Applications.* The application should provide sufficient information in the following categories: (1) agency profile; (2) description of workforce needs; and (3) organizational and evaluation readiness.

1. **Agency profile.** We are interested in understanding your agency, particularly the services your agency delivers, your structure, and your workforce.
   a. Organizational structure
   b. Size of the agency (# of staff and supervisors)
   c. Services the agency is responsible for delivering

2. **Description of workforce needs.** Tell us **your story** about your workforce. (*Note: it is NOT necessary to discuss all these areas, only those you believe are relevant to your particular workforce challenges.*) What are your most pressing workforce challenges? What were the most prominent workforce issues identified in your State's CFSR Statewide Assessment, CFSR Final Results, CFSP/APSR or PIP? What is your turnover rate for the past several years? What is the average tenure for staff, supervisors, and managers? You may wish to discuss your needs and interests regarding: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), recruitment, hiring, training and professional development, salary and benefits, performance management, caseload/workload, vacancies and turnover, workforce attitudes, physical work environment, or supervision.

3. **Description of organizational and evaluation readiness**, including a description of:
   a. Willingness, readiness, and capacity to meet the requirements and expectations of QIC-WA for project sites as listed in the "Requirements and Expectations of QIC-WA Project Sites" section above
   b. How the QIC-WA project could support agency strategic planning efforts, including CFSR/PIP and CFSP activities
   c. Other workforce efforts currently underway or being planned, such as anticipated technical assistance projects with either federally supported or philanthropic technical assistance providers
   d. Leadership's ability and willingness to be actively involved with the project for the duration of the project
   e. Qualifications, enthusiasm, and availability of proposed individuals who would serve in the *Site Implementation Manager* and *Data Coordinator* roles for the project (see previous description of roles and responsibilities)
   f. Current data collection and/or analysis capacity (e.g., how do you use your current Human Resources Information System, CWIS or SACWIS to inform workforce decisions and strategy? do you supplement it with other workforce data collection?), and your agency's capacity to collect additional data that might be needed for the project

Project Site Selection Process

The QIC-WA will recommend a final pool of applicant sites to the Children's Bureau for approval. We are looking to select a diverse array of agencies to support an evaluation that can inform a national audience, and as such, we will seek variation across sites in the following areas: (1) workforce needs and potential for interventions to meet those needs; (2) structure (e.g., state-supervised or county-supervised, territory, tribe), size, and geographic location; (3) availability of necessary individual-level HR and child welfare case-level data to conduct the project; (4) anticipated needs for capacity building services to support the potential project and fit with QIC-WA capacity to support these needs; (5) agency readiness to engage in workforce analytics and implement evidence-informed workforce practices, and (6) agency progress regarding workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Contacts

Please contact us by phone (310-825-0852) or by email (contact.qic.wa@gmail.com) with any questions or if you'd like support as you develop your application. We look forward to hearing from you!

Application Form (for reference)

The questions below are for your reference and to allow you to prepare an application. **To apply, complete the application form at bit.ly/QICWASITEAPPLICATIONFORM24 by February 15, 2024 at 11:59pm Pacific Time.**

Contact Information
What is the name of your agency?
What is your name?
What is your email address?
Please confirm your email address.
What is your business phone number?
What is your professional title?
What is your agency's jurisdiction (name of your tribal land, territory, city, county, or state)?
If your agency has a website, please provide the web address.

Team Proposed
Please describe the workforce development team you propose to bring to this project.
The QIC-WA recommends a broad-based set of representatives to serve on the team, including professionals representing human resources, continuous quality improvement and evaluation, training, child welfare leadership, supervisors, staff, tribal leaders and elders, and community partners. Please include the name, title, and expected project role for up to 6 key team members. As noted in the Request for Applications, required project site team roles include a project sponsor, site implementation manager, and data coordinator. Applicants are asked to assign individuals to this initiative, each representing a key function or role in child welfare or HR. Examples include:
- Child welfare leadership—a middle or upper-level manager with longevity, field and leadership experience, influence, and decision-making authority
- HR leadership—a middle or upper-level HR manager, such as chief human resources officer, director of human resources, human resources coordinator, human capital director, director of human resources operations, human resources administrator, assistant director of human resources, or human resources manager
- Child welfare personnel practices—an individual with knowledge of personnel practices (e.g., recruiting, hiring, onboarding, performance management, retention) in child welfare; could work in human resources or in child welfare, with a range of potential titles
- HR data and analytics—an individual with knowledge of the available HR data, data systems, reporting, analytics, etc., such as human resources data analyst, human resources systems analyst, human resources business analyst, human resources reporting analyst, or HRIS or HRMS analyst

Please provide the name, title, and project role for up to 6 proposed project team members:

1. Project Sponsor
2. Site Implementation Manager
3. Data Coordinator
4. Other – 1
5. Other – 2
6. Other – 3

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Goals
What does your agency hope to accomplish with a project?
Please describe the workforce development goals your plan to accomplish by working with the QIC-WA team on this project.

Agency Size
Approximately how many full-time equivalent (FTE) employed persons does your agency currently support in the area of Child Welfare (numbers only)?

Previous Workforce Initiatives
What current or recently completed workforce initiatives has your agency engaged in?
Please describe recent workforce initiatives in detail, including goals, steps taken to accomplish those goals, and processes to evaluate them.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Has your agency engaged in workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives?
If yes, please describe these efforts and the extent to which they were successful. Have DEI-related changes been sustained because of these efforts?

Analytics
How many full time equivalent (FTE) employed persons does your agency have dedicated to workforce analytics (numbers only)?

If you have positions dedicated to workforce analytics, what is their purpose and goals?
Please also describe any workforce analytics work products, and/or email them to the QIC-WA application review team (contact.qic.wa@gmail.com)

Outreach
How did you learn about this opportunity?

○ LinkedIn

○ Former QIC-WD project mailing list

○ NCWWI communication

○ Child Welfare Information Gateway Communication

○ Children's Bureau Regional Office

○ Colleague

○ Other (please describe) _____