FAQs

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Grants
New Pathways for Fathers and Families Grants
Responsible Fatherhood Opportunities for Reentry and Mobility Grants

Performance Measures,
Local Evaluations,
and Federally-Led Evaluations

Performance Measures and nFORM

How to Review the Performance Measures Now

Is there a list of specific performance measures that I will need to report and can I see a copy of those performance measure surveys now?

Specific performance measures have already been established (after receiving comment from the public) and are currently being reviewed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB). They can be found on the "Performance Measures" page at www.famlecross-site.info. Note that the format will look different in the web-based system for data collection, or nFORM (e.g., the system will automatically skip questions that are not relevant for particular clients).

Are the pre- and post-tests different for youth than for adults?

Yes, the pre- and post-tests for youth in Healthy Marriage Relationship Education (HMRE) programs are different for youth than for adults. There are no separate surveys for youth in the Responsible Fatherhood or ReFORM programs.

Are pilot data on the performance measures (means, SDs, reliability) available?

No, pilot data are not available.

Requirements: In General

Does every program applicant and/or participant have to complete every survey included on the www.famlecross-site.info website? What if my program does not provide specific services that are asked about in the surveys?

Everyone who applies for program services must complete the applicant characteristics survey. Enrolled clients are also expected to complete the pre-test and post-test surveys that apply to their program (e.g. youth in HMRE programs are not required to complete pre- and post-tests intended for fathers in RF programs). All performance measures on the www.famlecross-site.info website are standardized and should be used with clients. The questions have undergone a period of public comment, and are now being reviewed by the federal Office of Management and Budget. If a client hasn't participated in a specific set of services, they would indicate this in their responses. Note that the surveys will be electronic, via the nFORM system, which should ease data collection.

The FOA makes it clear that we are to collect and store data locally. Since the nFORM data is being collected and aggregated, what besides the local evaluation data are we to collect and store locally?

The FOAs do not require that grantees collect and store any data, besides performance measures and local evaluation data (though if desired applicants may propose to collect and store additional data in other systems). Grantees will use nFORM to collect store, and report on data to OFA. Grantees will be able to export individual-level data for their own use.

More Detail: Applicant Characteristics Survey

Who will be responsible for entering the participant intake (a.k.a applicant characteristics) information in nFORM?

Although there may be some exceptions, in general, program applicants should complete the applicant characteristics (and pre- and post-test) surveys directly in nFORM. nFORM allows for the surveys to be self-administered.

Will students who are participating in school-based programs be expected to share their contact information? What information will be collected to track these students?

Grantees are required to ask participants to complete the surveys, including the applicant characteristics survey. This information can be used to track participants. However, applicants or participants cannot be required to complete individual items or the entire set of survey questions; they can refuse to answer any or all questions.

More Detail: Program Operations Survey

Are grantees supposed to track and report on staff training, staff observation, and staff supervision activities using a specific format?

Yes, please see the "Program Operations" form on the "Performance Measures" page at the www.famlecross-site.info website.

More Detail: Pre- and Post-Test Surveys

Will there be a "don't know" option or the ability for participants to skip questions if they are unable to answer certain questions? This is particularly of concern for youth.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention: we'll take this into consideration.

Will nFORM allow for collection of employment data such as job starts, job retention benchmarks, wages, employer data, subsidized employment, etc.?

There are some employment-related measures in the different required performance measures. Please see the webpage "performance measures" on the website www.famlecross-site.info.

The performance measures for the Responsible Fatherhood Programs do not have a place to indicate if the father is expecting a child. Does this mean those that have not yet had their child born are not eligible (as a father)?

Fathers expecting a child are indeed eligible. The "program applicant characteristics" form includes a question (C4b) asking men whether there are any women currently pregnant with their child. See http://www.famlecross-site.info/Measures.html#ParticipantCharacteristics

Various data points in the PPR, like placements and ethnicity, are not in nFORM. Will they eventually be included?

Question A4 in the applicant characteristics form has an ethnicity question. nFORM will have places where case managers can enter case notes, which may include information about placements.

Will the pre and posttests will be coded so individuals' pre post can be compared, or is it group change the system will measure?
The system is being created so that individuals' pre- and post-test scores can be compared.

Have you confirmed the implications of asking this question – "Have you hit, spank, grab, or use physical punishment with [CHILD 1]?" – are with state mandatory reporting requirements for child maltreatment and endangerment?
Mandatory reporting is often limited to incidents that the reporter directly witnesses; but, if a grantee has concerns that an affirmative response to this item triggers mandatory reporting, the grantee should check their state laws and inform ACF.

Questions on harsh discipline have been used in many surveys. For example, the Fragile Families study, which includes a cohort of almost 5,000 children born in large U.S. cities between 1998 and 2000, asked parents to report whether and how often they spanked their child. The question included for performance measures has been purposefully limited to less severe forms of physical contact. There is substantial disagreement on the boundary between legitimate physical punishment and child abuse (Straus et al 2003). In addition, there is ambiguity in some of the acts described in the item. For example, a parent may grab a child to get him or her to come somewhere or prevent the child from taking an action, such as stepping into the street.

Is there a prescribed "roll up" of survey responses that defines the actual objective that question is designed to answer? For instance, several of the parenting questions seem to be getting at increasing the frequency of father-child contact.
Yes and no. The performance measures have all been developed with specific program outcomes in mind. However, at this time there is no prescribed roll-up of the measures: rather, the measures are intended to measure distinct outcomes related to the programs.

Additional Data Collection

Can we propose to collect data and use measures that are additional to the performance measures that will be required from all grantees through nFORM? Can we analyze and publish these additional data?

Yes, applicants may propose to collect any additional data to assess their program outcomes through additional questions, measures, or standardized instruments. Grantees who collect additional data may analyze these data and publish their own findings.

Budgeting for Performance Measures and nFORM

Should the budget amount allocated for the local evaluation include the cost of technology (like laptops, tablets, headphones, etc.) for nFORM data collection and project staff time to collect participant data?

Yes, the budget should include the cost of all necessary technology to collect data from each participant. The FOAs include detail on what to include in budgets: "The applicant's overall line-item budget and budget justification must also include detailed allocations for the range of required performance measure data and evaluation activities, including the following: Collection of performance data, including costs of staff training, time to collect data; Storage of performance data, including: Desktop/laptop computer or tablet purchase for ACASI on-line applicant characteristics and pre- and post-tests, including headphones, and maintenance; Costs for staff to conduct regular activity such as data entry, quality checks, reliability training for coding, etc.; and Monitoring and reporting performance data, including costs for staff to analyze data, create and review reports, plan and monitor adjustments."

How should we estimate the number of computers, tablets, headphones, etc. we need? Should we budget for every participant to have a laptop or tablet available at the same time?

You should budget for all technology needed to collect performance data from all participants based on your program and your approach. The FOAs state, "Applicants must describe how they will collect required data (applicant characteristics, program operations, enrollment, and participation (service delivery), and participant "outcomes" (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and actions), both at beginning of the program (pre-test) and at program exit (post-test)). Budgets should include the costs for all technology, including laptops, tablets, headphones, and maintenance.

Can we get assistance on obtaining deals on computers or tablets in large quantities?
No, we are not able to provide assistance on obtaining deals on computers or tablets in large quantities.

Can program staff time that is dedicated to preparing and submitting the performance reviews (PPRs and QPRs) be billed as part of the evaluation budget?
Applicants should refer to the FOAs' language on budgeting, which states, "The applicant's overall line-item budget and budget justification must also include detailed allocations for the range of required performance measure data and evaluation activities, including the following: Collection of performance data, including costs of staff training, time to collect data; Storage of performance data, including: Desktop/laptop computer or tablet purchase for ACASI on-line applicant characteristics and pre- and post-tests, including headphones, and maintenance; Costs for staff to conduct regular activity such as data entry, quality checks, reliability training for coding, etc.; and Monitoring and reporting performance data, including costs for staff to analyze data, create and review reports, plan and monitor adjustments." Since the last part of this statement refers to reporting performance data, time dedicated to preparing and submitting PPRs and QPRs should be included in applications as part of the performance management budget.

Changing Survey Questions

Will it be possible to omit, modify, or add questions to the pre- and post- surveys?
The questions have been established (after receiving comment from the public) to be standardized across all grantees and are now being reviewed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Although there may be some flexibility after the grants are awarded, at this point, all applicants should assume that all questions will be required to be asked as they are posted on the www.famlecross-site.info website.

Can the adult and youth surveys be blended?
(This question is only relevant for the HM grant program, because there is no youth survey for RF or ReFORM.) Blending the surveys will not be permitted.

Consent

Will nFORM include a consent process for every participant to complete (regardless of the type of evaluation), in which the participant would acknowledge that they have been informed that their participation is voluntary and sign a consent form?

It is anticipated that there will be a consent process, but the exact details of this process are under development (and indeed may vary from grantee to grantee, depending on issues such as the requirements of the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) with whom the grantee will work).

Data Quality Assurance

Is there a way for the program to assure data quality prior to a case manager's submission of data online?

Each grantee will need to provide supervision and support to case managers and other staff who enter online data. The FaMLE Cross-Site project will also provide training in data collection.

Grantee/Staff Access to Data

Can grantees, and grantee staff, have access to client data through the nFORM system?

Yes, the program staff will have access to client data through the nFORM system. Staff will be able to view individual-level applicant characteristics data, but not individual-level responses to pre-post surveys within nFORM. Staff will have access to all data that they enter (for example data related to program attendance and program operations). Staff will have access to aggregated data for reports. And grantee staff can export de-identified individual-level data into another program, such as Excel. That is, clients will be identified with an ID number rather than name, in data exported from nFORM.

Will there be data that grantees will NOT be allowed to access/download from nFORM?

Grantees will have access to all of their data within nFORM. However, nFORM is being developed with different user levels, so while some grantee staff can have access to all data within the system, others can be restricted from seeing individual client information. To protect accidental disclosure of clients' personally identifiable information, we are currently planning to develop the export function so that only de-identified information can be exported into a program outside of nFORM, such as Excel. That is, clients will be identified by an ID number rather than by name, in data exported from nFORM.

nFORM Procedures: Daily Operations

Will each staff member, such as a case manager, use nFORM as a case record system by entering client contact information daily?

nFORM is being created specifically for the next cohort of RFHM grantees, to be a Management Information System (MIS) for all grantees, so that staff can use it for their daily operations. (However, nothing in the FOAs precludes grantees from using additional MISs).

nFORM Procedures: Survey Timing

When should clients complete the surveys?

Although we are still considering options and flexibility, at this point we recommend that clients complete the applicant characteristics at intake, the pretest at the first workshop session, and the posttest at the last workshop session.

How will staff administer surveys to participants in nFORM? Does the grantee enter the client's confidential number before being able to access the client surveys clients complete on line? How can you be sure the participants complete the surveys?

After the client's name and other information is entered into nFORM during intake, staff will be able to search for the client by name in the system. Grantee staff will find the participant in nFORM and launch the pre-test or post-test survey for the participant from nFORM. The staff will open the survey for the client, which will then limit the client's access to the survey only. Staff will need to open the surveys for the client, so the staff will know the client is completing the survey himself or herself. Further, staff will likely be in the room with clients while they complete the surveys, for example, to answer questions. But the staff person will not see the clients' specific responses as he or she completes the surveys. When the client has completed the survey, the staff person may then have to enter his or her password, for example, to close out the survey and reaccess the main nFORM system.

Guidance for grantees on the mechanisms of conducting the surveys is still being developed; grantees may have flexibility in determining some of these issues.

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Do you have any estimate of the time required for data entry on average for a client contact, workshop event, or on an average per client basis?

We have estimated 2 minutes per entry, though the actual time will vary (e.g., after becoming familiar with the system, staff may be able to enter very rapidly). Time for staff to administer the surveys was included in our request to the federal Office of Management and Budget.

Can the "intake" survey (a.k.a "applicant characteristics" survey) and the "pre-test" survey be asked of participants at the same time? Can data collection begin at the first case management session?

The final decision has not been made and guidance will be forthcoming. At this point, the "applicant characteristics" survey would be given during application or intake, and the "pre-test" survey would be given at the beginning of the first workshop session, though there may be flexibility.

When should the post-test survey be administered?

We are expecting grantees to conduct the post-test at the end of the last session or workshop the client is expected to attend. The exception would be when programs are structured to last a month or less, in which case the post-test should be offered at one month after program entry. However, this is subject to change (pending approval from the federal Office of Management and Budget, who is reviewing our performance measures). Grantees will also receive technical assistance in implementing the post-test.

Changes in economic development outcomes might not be detected in post-tests that are conducted only one month after program entry. Will the local evaluation be an opportunity to measure economic development outcomes over a longer period of time?

The economic development performance measures are included so that grantees can gauge whether participants have made any gains: the potential for making gains will be dictated at least in part by the timing of the post-test. Yes, the local evaluation could be a source for measuring gains in economic development outcomes. Applicants "must propose a descriptive local evaluation plan or an impact local evaluation plan (in accordance with the funding level requested), which will answer one or more grantee-specific research question(s)," per the FOAs.

HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

nFORM Reports

What reports will we be able to generate or pull (for example, client emails)?

Grantees will be able to generate several reports at the touch of a button through nFORM, although the exact reports that will be available have not yet been determined. The system will also include a tool that will allow grantees to "query" the system on areas of interest to the grantee. Quantitative data for the QPRs and PPRs will also be generated automatically through nFORM.

OLDC (On-Line Data Collection)

Will we be expected to complete OLDC twice a year in addition to the data collected through nFORM?

No, we do not expect grantees to complete OLDC at all. The new performance measures, QPRs, PPRs, and nFORM are in place of OLDC.

Other data systems and MISs

What if we are already using a data system or MIS? Is nFORM intended to be the only data system we are allowed to use?

nFORM is being created specifically for the next cohort of RFHM grantees to be an Management Information System (MIS) for all grantees so that staff can use it for their daily operations, management, and performance reporting. Grantees will be required to enter data into nFORM. However, nothing in the FOAs precludes grantees from using other MISs in addition to nFORM.

Will nFORM be able to link, interface, or "speak" to other data management systems or MISs?

No, at this point nFORM is not designed or programmed to link, interface, or speak with other data systems, MISs, or outside systems (e.g., OWRA or WIC)

Partners

Should my letters of agreement with partner organizations say that partners should agree to provide performance measure data?

Yes, as the FOAs state, "Applicants must describe whether and how data will be collected by grantee staff, partner agencies, and/or subcontracted evaluators. If applicable, applicants must also include with their applications letters of agreement with partner agencies and/or subcontracted evaluators that outline the responsibilities of each agency, and that confirm the agencies' agreement to collect and submit performance measurement data."

If my partnering organizations are providing services as part of my program, will these partners be able to access nFORM and enter data into the system as well?

nFORM may be used by a single organization, or by the primary grantee organization and its partners. Partner organizations can enter data into the system. The FOAs state, "Applicants must describe whether and how data will be collected by grantee staff, partner agencies, and/or subcontracted evaluators. If applicable, applicants must also include with their applications letters of agreement with partner agencies and/or subcontracted evaluators that outline the responsibilities of each agency, and that confirm the agencies' agreement to collect and submit performance measurement data."

If the grantee is partnering with several community agencies for program implementation, would the QPR and PPR need to include data for each site, aggregate data, or both?

If partners are enrolling clients or providing services, grantees must develop and follow a process for collecting and entering the relevant data in nFORM. For example, partner staff could be given access to the system to enter participation data or send the data to the grantee staff, who enter it into nFORM. The QPR and PPR will include data for all clients served by the grantee and its partners. nFORM will automatically aggregate results across partners within a grantee when calculating the results for the QPR and PPR.

What about the "program operations" survey? If my organization is conducting program operations in two or more different locations, should we fill out one or two "program operations" surveys?

It is expected that each grantee fill out one survey for all of its operations. Grantees can choose to ask the same questions of each organization, and then combine answers in the single survey submitted to ACF through nFORM. Further, the FOAs state: "Applicants must describe how they will collect required data (...program operations…). Applicants must address their readiness to collect performance measure data, including readiness of staff to collect data …"

Will partner organizations that are not grantees be required to report data that they collect, if that data is separate from the RFHM performance measures and is collected outside of nFORM?

Organizations that are not grantees may collect separate data that will not be required to be reported to ACF. The exception is if partner organizations collect performance data on behalf of the grantee. The FOA states: "Applicants must describe whether and how data will be collected by grantee staff, partner agencies, and/or subcontracted evaluators. If applicable, applicants must also include with their applications letters of agreement with partner agencies and/or subcontracted evaluators that outline the responsibilities of each agency, and that confirm the agencies' agreement to collect and submit performance measurement data." Therefore, if data will be collected by the non-grantee organization will be used to respond to performance data requirements, then, yes, these data will be required to be reported to ACF.

Privacy

How will data remain private, and how can we ensure privacy, if nFORM links client name and contact information and surveys?

nFORM has a number of safeguards to protect privacy. nFORM and the accompanying surveys will be set up on secure web and database servers for online data collection utilizing its existing, mature, and continuously tested web data collection infrastructure. This infrastructure is in constant use for a variety of web data collection projects. It features the use of HTTPS (using transport layer security (TLS)) data communication; authentication (login and password); firewalls; and multiple layers of servers, all implemented on a mixture of platforms and systems in order to minimize Mathematica's vulnerability to security breaches.

Although the system will be secure, it is also important to develop protections to reduce the risk of human error. For example, the data that can be exported from nFORM into another program, such as Excel or a statistical package, will not include any personally identifiable information. Thus, the identifiable data will only be available in the secure system. Training will be provided to grantee and local evaluator staff on best practices for handling data with personally identifiable information. To further protect client privacy, we are planning to allow for very few staff outside of the grantee to be able to view identifiable individual information. To host and maintain the system, a small number of Mathematica system administrators will be able to view all data. At this stage, we are planning to only allow researchers and government staff access to de-identified data. However, if the grantee is selected for one of the federal evaluations, the contractor leading the evaluation will also need access to identifiable data.

If multiple participants use the same tablet or computer to enter their survey information, will they be able to see what other participants have entered?

No, participants will not be able to see each other's surveys or data; the surveys will automatically reset and clear after each use.

Will client data and contact information reside only on the grantees' computers or is it automatically uploaded to ACF?

Participant privacy will be safeguarded. All data will be housed at Mathematica Policy Research, an organization with decades of experience in safeguarding the privacy of personally identifiable information.

QPRs and PPRs

What is the difference between QPRs and PPRs?

Both the QPRs and the PPRs provide an opportunity for grantees to report to OFA on a limit set of performance measures, on a quarterly basis. Though the measures are very similar between the QPRs and PPRs, in general, the set of measures in the QPRs is shorter than the set in the PPRs. It is intended that grantees will report: (a) on the first three months of service on the first QPR; (b) on the first six months of service on the first PPR; (c) on the first nine months of service on the second QPR; and (d) on the whole year of service on the second PPR.

Have the existing PPRs been completely replaced, or are these in addition to the existing PPRs?

The PPR has been revised, and the revised version (posted on the www.famlecross-site.info website) will be required. The PPR in use by the current HMRF grantees will no longer be used.

Since the PPR states a reporting period beginning Oct 1, are we correct to assume start dates would be Oct 1, 2015?

No, the FOAs note, "Grantees will be given up to 9 months for intensive and comprehensive planning." Therefore, the start date for services will be sometime between the award of grants and nine months after.

Will QPRs and PPRs include financial data required on spending to date?
A financial form, called the SF425, will be required to be submitted with PPRs.

Is it recommended that grantees track QPR/PPR data through their own internal systems as a means of backup?
There is no recommendation that grantees track QPR/PPR data, though they may choose to do so.

Once the data from nFORM pre-populates the PPR, can we change or add data? Can reports be edited or regenerated in the event that information was missing or incorrectly entered? If not, is there a deadline by which data must be entered before it is transferred to the QPR or PPR?
The exact process for when data will need to be submitted, in order to pre-populate the QPR/PPR accurately, and whether/how to correct incorrect reports, is still being considered/determined.

Staffing for Data Collection

Are we required to have specific staff for data collection and management purposes? Can program staff carry out performance measure activities?
This is the responsibility of the applicant to propose. The FOAs do not set a specified staffing configuration for collecting performance measures. The FOAs state: “The applicant's overall line-item budget and budget justification must also include detailed allocations for the range of required performance measure data and evaluation activities, including the following: Collection of performance data, including costs of staff training, time to collect data; Storage of performance data, including: desktop/laptop computer or tablet purchase for ACASI on-line applicant characteristics and pre- and post-tests, including headphones, and maintenance; and costs for staff to conduct regular activity such as data entry, quality checks, reliability training for coding, etc.; and monitoring and reporting performance data, including costs for staff to analyze data, create and review reports, plan and monitor adjustments.”

When can data collection staff be hired?
The timing of when to hire staff will be determined after the award of grants.

Timing of nFORM availability

When is nFORM expected to be ready for use?

nFORM is slated to be ready for grantees to use when they are ready to serve participants. Note that the FOAs discuss a planning period of up to 9 months: nFORM will be ready when grantees are finished planning and ready to serve participants.

Storage of nFORM data

Where will nFORM data be stored?

nFORM data will be stored on secure web and database servers at Mathematica Policy Research (see section headed "Privacy").

Training and Technical Assistance

Will there be training on nFORM? Will there be on-site training?

Yes, there will be training, technical assistance, and a help desk for all grantees; but, no, there will not be on-site training.

How long will training on nFORM take before we can begin to serve program participants? How often will training occur?

There is no estimate on the timing of training or how long training will take: this will be determined after grants are awarded.

Will you provide technical assistance to help grantees use nFORM, and will this be limited to a specific time period? How will I be able to address glitches in nFORM?

A customer service hotline for grantees to ask technical assistance questions will be available. It has not yet been determined whether customer service will be available throughout entire grant award period, though it is likely.

Which grantees will be provided with technical support?

All grantees will receive performance measure-related training and technical assistance from the FaMLE Cross-Site contractor. A subset of grantees will receive direct technical assistance with local evaluations.

Which Pre- and Post-Test Survey to Use?

If we propose to work with youth and young adults (e.g., aged 16-24), which performance measures would we use (the adult survey or the youth survey)? What is the age range for the youth surveys?
(This question is only relevant for the HM grant program, because there is no youth survey for RF or ReFORM.) The final guidance on which survey to use is still being considered, and grantees may have flexibility to use the version which best fits their population. The age range for the youth surveys is undefined, although it has been developed to target youth that are of high school age.

There is a pre-post survey for incarcerated fathers. Is that survey to be used exclusively by ReFORM grantees, or will the New Pathways for Fathers and Families grantees that also serves some correctional clients be able to use the version for incarcerated fathers as well?
(This question is only relevant for the RF and ReFORM grant programs, because there is no survey for HMRE for incarcerated populations.) The final guidance on which survey to use is still being considered, and grantees may have flexibility to use the version which best fits their population.

Implementation Issues: In Schools

How will the pre- and post-test surveys be implemented in a school-based program?
Applicants are expected to address how they would collect pre- and post-test data using computers or tablets in the school setting. The FOAs state, "Applicants must describe how they will collect required data (applicant characteristics, program operations, enrollment, and participation (service delivery), and participant "outcomes" (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and actions), both at beginning of the program (pre-test) and at program exit (post-test)). Applicants must document whether and how the local evaluator was consulted in the development of performance measurement data collection plans. Applicants must address their readiness to collect performance measure data, including readiness of staff to collect data – that is, applicants must describe staff qualifications and training; identify specific staff who will be responsible for performance measurement data collection; state any intention to designate staff as data manager(s) or intention to hire a data manager – and capacity to collect data in a uniform, systematic manner. Applicants must describe how they will maintain participant privacy."

What will happen if schools or school districts do not allow for multiple surveys or for certain performance measure questions to be asked?

Applicants are expected to address how they would collect information. While many challenges will need to be addressed post-award, it seems reasonable to ask schools to permit students to complete surveys such as those proposed as part of the performance measures: for example, many other federal programs have successfully conducted surveys in schools (many with more sensitive questions).

Implementation Issues: Internet Connection Issues

This system of reporting seems to assume that Internet connection is available in all places we teach or hold program activities. However, this is not a given in rural areas. Or, in some places, we have Internet access, but the venues where we offer our classes might not have Wifi. How do grantees handle getting clients in front of a connected computer, tablet, etc?

The FOAs state, "In the rare case where applicants and/or partners do not have access to the internet because of systemic lack of connectivity, the proposal must clearly describe potential avenues for collecting performance measurement data through the internet, as well as indicate a willingness to work with ACF to find ways to implement internet data collection through these other avenues." If, after grants are awarded, internet access is demonstrated to be impossible to obtain in a specific setting, ACF may be open to considering other options (e.g. providing clients with a phone, and asking grantee staff to conduct the surveys and record the answers in nFORM as clients provide the answers).

Can participants complete the surveys off-line? For example, on a tablet (but NOT on-line) and then the worker upload the responses once they return to an Internet portal?

No, the client surveys will need to be completed on-line. Note that FOAs state, "In the rare case where applicants and/or partners do not have access to the internet because of systemic lack of connectivity, the proposal must clearly describe potential avenues for collecting performance measurement data through the internet, as well as indicate a willingness to work with ACF to find ways to implement internet data collection through these other avenues."

Have you thought about what kinds of forms are needed, probably paper, to record information until the staff has time to enter data into nFORM? For places that do not have internet connection, can we utilize paper questionnaires for the intake, pre, post surveys that can be later entered into nFORM? Are there alternate intake and pre-tests/post-tests available for use in situations where there is no Internet access?

No, there are no alternate forms. Applicants should describe their proposed processes for collecting performance information. It is expected that the applicant characteristics and pre/post-test surveys are collected on-line. The FOAs state, "Applicants must describe how they will collect required data (applicant characteristics, program operations, enrollment, and participation (service delivery), and participant "outcomes" (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and actions), both at beginning of the program (pre-test) and at program exit (post-test))." The FOAs also note that a paper and pencil version of pre- and post-tests will be available in the rare case of technology failure, e.g., absence of sufficient connectivity or power outage. However, the FOAs also state, "In the rare case where applicants and/or partners do not have access to the internet because of systemic lack of connectivity, the proposal must clearly describe potential avenues for collecting performance measurement data through the internet, as well as indicate a willingness to work with ACF to find ways to implement internet data collection through these other avenues."

Is there any consideration into the development of an offline app that can be downloaded on to tablets for survey administration when wi-fi is unavailable?

No, we are not planning to develop such an app: survey administration should be conducted on-line.

Implementation Issues: Languages

Will the surveys be provided in multiple languages?

nFORM is being programmed for English and Spanish. The audio recordings of survey questions will be available in English and Spanish.

If we serve someone who speaks a language other than English or Spanish, how would we provide the Intake, Pre-, and Post-tests if they are only available in English and Spanish?

Applicants should propose an appropriate approach to collecting performance measures. Please consider how other English- or Spanish-language surveys are collected from populations that do not speak English or Spanish. The FOAs state "Applicants must describe how they will collect required data .... Applicants must document whether and how the local evaluator was consulted in the development of performance measurement data collection plans. Applicants must address their readiness to collect performance measure data, including readiness of staff to collect data – that is, applicants must describe staff qualifications and training; identify specific staff who will be responsible for performance measurement data collection; state any intention to designate staff as data manager(s) or intention to hire a data manager – and capacity to collect data in a uniform, systematic manner."

What will we use for ACASI if we have a customer who speaks a language OTHER THAN English or Spanish?

The ACASI will only work in English and Spanish. Applicants should propose an appropriate approach to collecting performance measures. Please consider how other English- or Spanish-language surveys are collected from populations that do not speak English or Spanish.

In our program, we work with clients who speak over 10 different languages and do not read or understand English or Spanish. Will there be any modifications for programs like ours so that we can successfully meet requirements?

No, unfortunately, the surveys will only be available in English and Spanish.

Implementation Issues: Literacy Levels

What is the comprehension literacy level of the pre and post surveys? How will the performance measures be adapted for persons with literacy issues?

We assessed the Flesch-Kincaid reading ease and grade level for measures that were typical of the most complex and least complex measures on the applicant characteristics, pre- and post-test surveys. For the adult pre- and post-test surveys, the Flesch-Kincaid grade levels range from 0.0 to 8.8. For the fatherhood pre- and post-test surveys, the Flesch-Kincaid grade levels range from 0.0 through 7.1. For the youth pre- and post-test surveys, grade levels ranged from 2.4 to 11.9. However, ACASI (audio computer-assisted self-interviewing) eliminates the requirement of reading ability for completing computer-based surveys because a recording reads the survey items to respondents. Respondents with low literacy levels do not have to struggle to read the survey items. Researchers have successfully used ACASI with a wide range of populations and for surveys on a wide range of topics.

Implementation Issues: Multiple Test Takers at a Time

How do we logistically have 10 - 16 people fill out a computer-based form if we're running the curriculum as an off-site retreat?

With regard to logistics, applicants should propose a plan that allows participants to complete the surveys online. The FOAs state, "“Applicants must describe how they will collect required data (applicant characteristics, program operations, enrollment, and participation (service delivery), and participant “outcomes” (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and actions), both at beginning of the program (pre-test) and at program exit (post-test)). … Applicants must address their readiness to collect performance measure data, including readiness of staff to collect data – that is, applicants must describe staff qualifications and training; identify specific staff who will be responsible for performance measurement data collection; state any intention to designate staff as data manager(s) or intention to hire a data manager – and capacity to collect data in a uniform, systematic manner.”

Implementation issues: Participant Refusal to Answer Questions

What if participants refuse to fill out any of the questions?

Grantees are required to ask participants to complete the surveys, including the applicant characteristics survey. However, applicants or participants cannot be required to complete surveys, either individual items or the entire survey: they can refuse to answer any or all questions.

What if participants in an education program do not want to have their data stored on another survey. Can they still receive educational workshops?

In general, yes, clients will be able to participate regardless of whether they answer all questions or refuse to answer any.

Implementation Issues: Prisons

We currently work with incarcerated fathers but they do not allow staff to take technology, including cell phones/ipads/tablets, into the facility for security reasons; in some, wireless internet is not available. Please advise. For example, would this situation allow the use of paper versions?

Not necessarily. Please seek potential avenues for collecting performance measurement data through the internet. The FOAs state, "In the rare case where applicants and/or partners do not have access to the internet because of systemic lack of connectivity, the proposal must clearly describe potential avenues for collecting performance measurement data through the internet, as well as indicate a willingness to work with ACF to find ways to implement internet data collection through these other avenues." If, after grants are awarded, internet access is demonstrated to be impossible to obtain in a specific setting, ACF may be open to considering other options (e.g. providing clients with a phone, and asking grantee staff to conduct the surveys and record the answers in nFORM as clients provide the answers).

Are there specific security arrangements for staff who need to use tablets etc. within County Jails or other facilities?

Such security arrangements will need to be decided after grants are awarded.

Implementation Issues: Smartphones

Will the full n-Form platform have a mobile-friendly version as well? The prototype does not display well on mobile currently.

It is doubtful that nFORM will be usable on a mobile device (other than tablets). The FOAs state, "Applicants must document that they have budgeted for sufficient computers (laptops, desktop, tablets) that can use the specific web-browsers Internet Explorer version 10 or higher or Chrome (version 36 or higher). (With regard to tablets, grantees may use iPad (not Mini) or Samsung Galaxy Tablet 10.1; both tablet models must use the Chrome browser, version 36 or higher. It is possible that other tablets will also work with nFORM as long as they are using Chrome; however, the extensive testing will only be conducted with the identified tablet models.)"

Implementation Issues: Taking ACASI Surveys without Audio Assistance

Can participants without literacy issues take the surveys – which are set up with an audio component (called Audio Computer Assisted Self-Interview, or ACASI) – without using the audio component?
Yes: surveys can be completed with or without listening to the recorded questions through headphones.

Implementation Issues: Technology Issues

Will there need to be computer and internet access for participants at every workshop or session?
No, in general, computer and internet access for participants is not required at every workshop or session. The pre-test should be conducted at the start of the first session, and the post-test should be conducted at the end of the last session the client is expected to attend. Therefore, computer and internet access should be provided at the first and last sessions.

What software is needed to collect data through the nFORM MIS system?
The FOAs state, "Applicants must document that they have budgeted for sufficient computers (laptops, desktop, tablets) that can use the specific web-browsers Internet Explorer version 10 or higher or Chrome (version 36 or higher). (With regard to tablets, grantees may use iPad (not Mini) or Samsung Galaxy Tablet 10.1; both tablet models must use the Chrome browser, version 36 or higher. It is possible that other tablets will also work with nFORM as long as they are using Chrome; however, the extensive testing will be conducted with the identified tablet models.)" Other software capabilities will be detailed after grants are awarded.

Do you recommend that clients use laptops or tablets to complete the pre and post survey? Is there any data to show which is easier for the client?
No, we do not have any recommendations.

Why are mini ipads (or other technology) not allowed for use with nFORM?
We do not have the budget to test nFORM on a wide range of platforms.

Is there a particular model of Samsung Galaxy 10.1" tablet that we should be looking at? (I have done a little research and have already come across Galaxy 1, 2, 3, and 4 as well as note and pro models. Some have different processor and display specs and I wanted to know what has been tested.)

No, we don't have model recommendations more specific than our recommendations to use the Samsung Galaxy Tablet 10.1 and iPad (not Mini) with the Chrome browser (version 36 or higher). Variations and different model versions of these recommended tablets should be interchangeable for nFORM functioning. The key factors are tablet size and use of Chrome (version 36 or higher).

What type of Android are we looking for? There are many different versions.

We do not have any specific Android recommendations. The key recommendation is to have the Chrome browser (version 36 or higher) on the recommended devises (Samsung Galaxy Tablet 10.1 and iPad [not mini]).

nFORM Technical Issues: Adding Questions

Can we add questions to the nFORM surveys? In other words, is nFORM customizable so we can add other performance measures, or measures for local evaluations?

No, unfortunately grantees will not be able to add questions to the pre/post surveys themselves, though nothing in the FOAs prohibits grantees from collecting other data (e.g. surveys) outside of nFORM.

Will modifications be possible so that we can track things like workshop language and support services offered at individual workshop sessions (e.g. bus tickets and gift cards for completion)?

A set number of options will be available, for tracking services; but modifications will not be possible.

Would it be possible to use the A-CASI technology for additional survey questions related to our local evaluation?

No, unfortunately grantees will not be able to add questions to the applicant characteristics or pre/post surveys themselves, though nothing in the FOAs prohibits grantees from collecting other data (e.g. surveys) outside of nFORM.

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nFORM Technical Issues: Browsers

Does nFORM work with Safari on a desktop or laptop?

It is doubtful that nFORM will work on Safari. The FOAs state, “Applicants must document that they have budgeted for sufficient computers (laptops, desktop, tablets) that can use the specific web-browsers Internet Explorer version 10 or higher or Chrome (version 36 or higher). (With regard to tablets, grantees may use iPad (not Mini) or Samsung Galaxy Tablet 10.1; both tablet models must use the Chrome browser, version 36 or higher. It is possible that other tablets will also work with nFORM as long as they are using Chrome; however, the extensive testing will be conducted with the identifiedtablet models.)”

nFORM Technical Issues: Client ID, and Linking to Client ID

Will clients have a “client ID?” Will clients need to remember their "client number" for the purposes of matching the pre and post tests? Will the grantee need to keep a master list? How will client numbers be assigned – by nFORM or by the grantee?

A client ID will be created by nFORM and stored in the system with the surveys and other client information. Therefore, neither the client, the staff, nor the grantee will have to remember the ID number or keep a master list. For example, if the staff person is setting up the post-test for a client he or she could search for the client by name, and pull up their profile, which will include the ID and a link to the survey.

Will nFORM assign a unique ID to couples which users will be able to use during export?

Members of a couple will each be assigned an individual ID, and the pair will be assigned the same couple ID. Both IDs will be available to export.

How will we link participants with additional questions posed by the local evaluation survey? How will we get the identifier to link to additional survey questions?

nFORM will automatically create an ID when a client is entered into the system. That ID will be visible in the client profile, which will allow users to use the same ID for other data collection and link all data available for a given client. This ID will also be exportable along with other data in nFORM.

nFORM Technical Issues: Correcting Errors

Can participants go back when answering the surveys in order to change answers? Is there a review option before submission of surveys? Are there safe guards if participants make errors, for example, they accidently hit they have children when they do not?
We are working out the details, but we have been planning to allow users to go back to previous screens in a survey and change responses. We will also have some validation checks to flag unlikely or impossible responses (such as birth dates that are in the future). Once a client has submitted a survey, though, he or she will not be able to change responses.

Will there be an after-the-fact option to edit client inputs if they confuse what the question is or decline to provide requested information?
For the client surveys, no, there will not be an option to edit client input. Although the surveys are self-administered by the client, grantees will receive training on best practices for data collection, such as being prepared to answer questions. Thus, questions the client has while taking the survey will be answered in real-time by grantee staff. Clients will be able to toggle back to previous questions in nFORM while taking the survey. However, clients will not be able to revise responses once the survey is submitted. Further, to protect clients' privacy, grantee staff will not have access to a client's pre-test or post-test. (Grantees will have access to de-identified pre- and post-test data through the export function of nFORM.)

nFORM Technical Issues: Data by Caseworker

You mentioned that the survey data grantees will have access to will be de-identified. Will we be able to get data disaggregated by workers to use the data to assess worker effectiveness?
We have not worked out the specifics of the export function but the assigned case worker could be one of the fields that is exported with the de-identified client-level data. However, unless an impact study design is used the clients' outcomes cannot definitively answer questions about staff effectiveness.

nFORM Technical Issues: Data by Site

For Grantees with multiple sites, are surveys gathered and monitored site by site, or as a whole?

For reporting to OFA, including the PPR and QPR, data will be aggregated across sites within grantee. nFORM will have a site field, however, so grantees can track information separately by site for their own purposes.

nFORM Technical Issues: Document Storage

Can grantees store documents in nFORM, for example, employment verifications, training certificates, resumes etc.?

We are not currently planning to enable document storage in nFORM.

nFORM Technical Issues: Drop-down Menus

Will there be drop down menus in nFORM for things like Case Worker's name and Status? For example, is the "agency providing workshop" or "referred to" dropdown pre-populated, or does the grantee populate that with a list of partners?

Yes, we are developing a number of drop-down menus to reduce data entry burden. We are still working out details, but some drop-downs will be pre-populated and some will be based on data entered by grantee staff. For example, once a case worker is entered in the system, he or she will appear in a list of staff who can be assigned to a client. And, grantee staff will need to fill in information about agencies providing the workshops, which will then appear in a drop down to select when scheduling specific sessions.

nFORM Technical Issues: Duplicate Enrollments

How do you plan on minimizing duplicate enrollments?

When a new record is created, nFORM will automatically check for possible duplicates within a grantee. nFORM will identify and flag possible duplicates, searching on name and date of birth. If a possible duplicate is identified, staff will be directed to the relevant record and be asked to determine whether it is truly a duplicate. nFORM will only search for duplicates within grantees, not across grantees. Grantees are not prohibited from serving clients who receive services from another grantee program.

nFORM Technical Issues: Email Reminders

Can we set automatic email reminders to clients?
No, at this point nFORM is not being designed to send set automatic email remainders to clients.

nFORM Technical Issues: Enrolling Client in Multiple Activities

Will nFORM allow a client to be enrolled in multiple activities?
Yes: clients will be able to be signed up for more than one activity/workshop.

nFORM Technical Issues: Entering Data from Multiple Locations

We have many locations where classes will be held and therefore, where data will be collected. Will we need someone to collate data centrally then upload to nFORM?
nFORM is a web-based system; thus staff from multiple locations can enter data in real-time. Note that data from other systems or software, such as Excel, will not be able to be uploaded into nFORM; however, performance measure data must be entered. Applicants are expected to propose an appropriate approach to entering data.

nFORM Technical Issues: Entering the Same Client Twice

If a participant is enrolled in another responsible fatherhood program, will nFORM tell you when you are entering them in the "new client" field?
No, nFORM is not designed to link participants' information between grantee organizations.

nFORM Technical Issues: Exporting Data

Can we export data from nFORM throughout the grant period, e.g. for agency use or for local evaluations?
Yes, as it is being planned currently, grantees will be able to use an export tool in nFORM, to download de-identified individual-level data – which may be used for the grantee’s analysis, and may also be used for publication.

Will nFORM exported data be compatible with programs like SPSS or Excel?
That is the intention. nFORM is being designed so that data can be exported and used in statistical packages like SPSS, SAS, or Excel.

Can the info from nFORM be uploaded into Salesforce?
nFORM is being designed so that data can be exported and used in statistical packages like SPSS, SAS, or Excel. Applicants and grantees will need to determine whether data can be uploaded into Salesforce.

nFORM Technical Issues: Interrupted Surveys

Suppose internet service is disrupted during a client survey. Will they have to start over?
No, we do not anticipate a client having to start over a survey even with an internet disruption. nFORM is being designed to save survey data periodically. However, with a long disruption, the client may get logged out of the survey and have to be logged back into the survey by grantee staff. If this happens, the client will return to their last unanswered question.

nFORM Technical Issues: Non-Grantee Computers

If a client has their own I-pad can they use that to log into nFORM?
Yes, however, the caseworker will need to log into nFORM to launch surveys for the participants. The client will not be able to access any other information in nFORM. When the client completes the survey, the staff person will have to exit the survey and log out of nFORM.

If a school has computers can we use their computers to access nFORM?
In general, yes, a school's computers can be used to administer the survey. However, nFORM will be tested on a limited number of configurations (e.g., Chrome 36 or higher), so if the school's devices do not meet those specifications, nFORM may not perform optimally.

nFORM Technical Issues: Recording Case Notes

Is there a place for case notes or just the ability to use the radio buttons and drop-down menus?
The one-on-one service contact fields include space for case notes. We do not currently have plans for adding case notes to the workshop sessions.

nFORM Technical Issues: Recording Workshop Attendance

Can you input attendance for an entire class or do you have to do it individually?
The attendance feature in nFORM will pull up a list of all clients registered for a workshop session. The grantee staff will simply highlight and select clients who attended that session. nFORM will also allow grantee staff to select drop-ins who attended a session.

nFORM Technical Issues: Remote Access, Off-line Capability and Off-site Completion (e.g., via web link)

Is the nFORM prototype a web based system, so it can be remotely accessible?
The nFORM system is being developed to be completely web-based, so that it can be accessed anywhere the Internet is accessible. Nevertheless, it is being programmed to safeguard data, e.g. by requiring passwords.

If our tablets will be capable in offline environments of saving survey data, then could we upload data when we are back online?
No, nFORM will not be accessible off-line, and data will not be able to be uploaded to nFORM.

Can participants complete nFORM from their homes (by clicking on a user-specific hyperlink) or do they have to be physically with a staff member?
Participants will not necessarily need to be with a staff member for the duration of the survey; but, yes, as of now, we are asking staff to set up the survey for participants, which means the participant would need to be physically with the staff member to take the survey. We have not developed nFORM surveys to be sent out via weblinks.

Yesterday's webinar said if programs were less than 1 month long, participants should complete post-tests after one month. If participants have access to appropriate computer facilities, will we be able to send them a link to the correct nform instrument?
We have not developed nFORM surveys to be sent out via weblinks.

What should we do if we will not have Internet access in the location(s) in which we are providing services?
Please see the topic called “Implementation Issues: Internet Connection Issues.”

nFORM Technical Issues: Multiple Post-tests

Is it possible to implement a longitudinal design and administer the post-test at multiple points? That is, is nFORM equipped to handle multiple post-tests from a single participant?
No, nFORM is not equipped for multiple post-test applications. Note that local evaluation plans could incorporate multiple uses of the post-test, though the grantee/local evaluator would need to determine alternate methods to collect the data, outside of nFORM. Nevertheless, with regard to research design, please note that the FOAs state, "Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)." Therefore, the applicant should propose the design that is best suited to answer the research question(s).

nFORM Technical Issues: Setting up Workshops (Multiple Components; with Non-Standard Recurrence)

If a single workshop integrates multiple components, will nFORM capture this?
Yes, nFORM is designed to enable programs to designate all of the components of a workshop.

If a workshop series is held in a frequency that does not always fall (or recur) on the same day of the week, but that will be scheduled on specific days/dates, will the nFORM interface allow for the entry of such a sequence of sessions into the calendar?
Yes, grantees will be able to set up sessions that do not occur on the same day each week, but they will need to create each session manually. That is, they will not be able to use the autofill option in nFORM that can create multiple sessions if they are on consistent days of the week.

nFORM Technical Issues: Statistical Tests

Will nFORM provide results of statistical tests (dependent samples t-tests) of whether scores improved from pre- to post-test?
Though the exact reports that will be available in nFORM are still under consideration, nFORM will almost certainly not provide statistical tests. However, nFORM is being designed so that data can be exported and used with statistical packages like SPSS or SAS.

nFORM Technical Issues: Uploading External Data

Can we upload data from other systems, or even from Excel?
No, it will not be possible to upload information from other data systems into nFORM, or from programs like Excel.

Can Scantron technology be used to collect data and then upload to nForm?
No, data will not be able to uploaded into nFORM.

Can separate surveys used for local evaluation be added to nFORM?
No, data cannot be uploaded nor can nFORM be modified to add additional questions. However, the FOA does not prohibit grantees from collecting additional data through other means (e.g., a questionnaire)

nFORM Technical Issues: Users (Number; Rights)

Is there a limit to how many users and usernames a grantee may create?
In general, no, there is no limit.

How many users can be assigned as administrators? Does the administrator have complete access to all participants' info in nFORM?
We have not determined a limit on the number of administrator accounts each grantee will have. A grantee administrator will have access to all user accounts and clients within his or her grantee. (A grantee administrator will not have access to other grantees' accounts or clients.)

Will there be different rights for different types of nFORM users? For example, can a staff member assigned to a separate sub-set also access "all clients" (enrolled in the same program)? Can nFORM limit what a case manager sees to just their caseload? Can the director review case manager's case notes at any time?
We are developing different user levels, so that grantee staff can restrict some users from seeing individual client information. Users who are granted access to individual client information, however, will have access to all clients within a grantee. Users with specific rights, such as directors, will be able to review all data.

Will clients have their own usernames in nFORM?
No, only staff will have usernames.

nFORM Technical Issues: Viewing Participant Activity

Where will nFORM collect information about time spent with client (i.e., dosage) and whether the service was individual or group?
Information about workshop attendance will be recorded in the Workshop section of the system; information about individual-level services will be recorded in the Clients section of the system. Information will be consolidated on the client program activity dashboard.

Miscellaneous: Counting Couples

How will we count couples in nFORM? Will couples count as two served?
Couples will begin to be counted as couples when they arrive to complete the applicant characteristics survey together. Although the decision on how to count couples for performance targets is still being considered, at this point, for the QPR and PPR, nFORM will calculate attendance based on whether at least one member of a couple attended a service.

Miscellaneous: Curriculum associated with performance measures

Is there a specific curriculum/set of curricula that correspond to the client evaluations?
No: there is no specific curriculum/set of curricula corresponding to the performance measures.

Miscellaneous: Federal Register Notices

What Federal Register can be referenced & reviewed for input of community?
The 60-Day Federal Register Notice and the 30-Day Federal Register Notice associated with this data collection have already been posted, and the period for public comment has passed. Note that we distributed both Federal Register Notices widely through the listservs for the current grantees, the national RF Clearinghouse, and the National Resource Center on Healthy Marriage and Families.

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Miscellaneous: nFORM Availability after Grant Period

If we are awarded a grant and use nFORM to track data during the 5 years, then secure other funding to continue the program beyond the grant term, will it be possible to purchase nFORM to continue using the same data collection/tracking system?
The decision about whether/how to offer nFORM at the end of the grant period has not been made.

Miscellaneous: nFORM Development

Who developed the nFORM system? (It looks like it will be very user-friendly & useful tool.)
ACF set the guidelines and parameters for nFORM, and Mathematica Policy Research developed nFORM per those guidelines and parameters. (The system is based on another previous successful Management Information System that Mathematica created for ACF for the Parents and Children Together evaluation).

Miscellaneous: Tracking Recruitment

Can nFORM keep track of potential clients before they go through intake and become participants?
No, at this point, nFORM is only being designed to keep track of applicants (who go through intake) and participants.

Miscellaneous: Workshop Registration through nFORM

Can participants register for workshops through nFORM?
Case managers or other staff will be able to register participants for workshops through nFORM, but participants will not be able to register for workshops themselves through nFORM.

Local Evaluations

Expectations

What is a local evaluation, and are all program applicants expected to propose a local evaluation?

For the definition of a local evaluation, please see Section I of the FOAs, under the heading "Local Evaluations" and Section IV.2, under the heading "Funded Activities Evaluation Plan." The FOAs note that “applicants must propose a descriptive local evaluation plan or an impact local evaluation plan (in accordance with the funding level requested), which will answer one or more grantee-specific research question(s)”: therefore, all applicants are expected to propose a local evaluation plan.

Definition: Descriptive and Impact Evaluation

I understand what an impact evaluation is; however, could you explain the basic concept of a descriptive evaluation?

The FOAs state, “Applicants that propose to conduct descriptive evaluations must use data and analysis to describe and explain the importance/implications of the program’s processes (such as a process or program implementation study) and/or the program’s population (such as a pre-post study).” Therefore, a descriptive evaluation must use data and analysis to describe and explain the importance/implications of the program’s processes and/or the program’s populations.

The FOAs also provide a helpful example of the distinction between a descriptive and impact evaluation: in Section I, they include examples of priority topics, and then they state, “For the topic areas listed here, descriptive studies would not have a control/comparison group; impact studies would have a control/comparison group. For example, a program offering three types of services could look for associations between participants’ use of those services and outcomes: this would be a descriptive study. On the other hand, the program could randomly assign participants to be eligible to use one, two, or all three services, and then analyze whether the groups had different outcomes: this would be an impact study.”

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Definition: Local Evaluator

What is the definition of local evaluator? What kind of entity should we seek to provide this service to our organization?

The FOAs state that "Local evaluators may be universities, research organizations, evaluation consultants, or other institutions with experience in conducting rigorous evaluations." Thus, while there is no required type of organization, the entity should have experience in conducting rigorous evaluations. Please see the webpage entitled "Evaluation Design Resources" on the www.famlecross-site.info website, which includes a break-out section entitled "Working with an Evaluator."

What level of involvement should a local evaluation have?

While the FOAs do not set a specific level of involvement, the FOAs do state, "Local evaluations must be conducted by an independent evaluator, referred to as the 'local evaluator.'" The FOAs also provide evaluation criteria against which applications will be scored, one of which reads, "The applicant addresses all components related to a local evaluator, including a signed letter of agreement with a local evaluator to conduct the local evaluation independently." Thus, local evaluators are expected to conduct the local evaluation independently: such involvement will likely be more than limited or minimal.

Definition: Local Evaluations and Federally-led Evaluations

How are the federally-led evaluations different from local evaluations?

The federally-led evaluations are a separate, additional component of the FOAs. The FOAs state that "the federal government is sponsoring federally-led evaluations. The federal evaluations will be conducted by independent contractors with experience mounting small- and large-scale demonstrations and/or descriptive and impact evaluations. As a condition of acceptance of an award under this FOA, all grantees that are asked are required to participate fully in ACF-sponsored evaluations and adhere to all evaluation protocols established by ACF to be carried out by its designee contractors. In the event that a grantee is selected for a federally led evaluation, the federal government may incorporate the local evaluation into the federally led evaluation, or it may waive the local evaluation requirement."

Access to data

If the local evaluation team is independent, can the grantee have access to the data throughout the course of the grant and afterwards (e.g., for publication)?
Yes, the grantee and the local evaluator will have access to data throughout the course of the grant and for publication.

Agreement with local evaluator

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is required with the evaluator and a letter of agreement, correct? Do you have a sample MOU?
Yes: the FOAs state, "Applicants must identify the local evaluator or local evaluator organization and include a signed letter of agreement with this local evaluator. Applicants must include curriculum vitae for the leader of the research project (i.e., Principal Investigator or Research Project Director). We do not have a sample MOU available. Please demonstrate in the MOU agreement support of the evaluation plan, and an understanding and outline of roles and responsibilities, as well as commitments to adhere to the FOA guidelines.

If we have a contract with a local evaluator, and the local evaluation is waived due to participation in the federal evaluation, might we still be required to pay the local evaluator as agreed?
While we can't recommend any specific course of action, it seems prudent to tailor agreements that are responsive to the range of possible scenarios.

The second file requires a signed letter of agreement with a local evaluator but what if we use a bidding process?
The FOAs state "Applicants must identify the local evaluator or local evaluator organization and include a signed letter of agreement with this local evaluator." Thus, if a bidding process must take place, it will most likely need to occur before submission of the application, as the application must have a signed letter of agreement.

HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

Budgeting: General

What do "local evaluation costs" include? For example, do they include both internal costs (internal staff, data manager, data entry, supervision, etc.) as well as the contract with the external evaluator, or JUST the evaluation contract amount?

The FOAs include detail on what to include in budgets: "The applicant's overall line-item budget and budget justification must also include detailed allocations for the range of required … evaluation activities, including the following: Collection of performance data, including costs of staff training, time to collect data; Storage of performance data, including: Desktop/laptop computer or tablet purchase for ACASI on-line applicant characteristics and pre- and post-tests, including headphones, and maintenance; Costs for staff to conduct regular activity such as data entry, quality checks, reliability training for coding, etc.; and Monitoring and reporting performance data, including costs for staff to analyze data, create and review reports, plan and monitor adjustments." Although much of this language refers to performance measures, it also refers to evaluation: thus, a wide range of evaluation costs may be proposed. The FOAs also have evaluation criteria against which applications will be scored. These include the following under BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION, Local Evaluation Plan: “The applicant’s budget for the local evaluation is clearly detailed, with costs identified for staffing and subcontract agreements and other direct costs that are consistent with the identified plan and timeline. The applicant’s budget allocates funding for local evaluation in accordance with the level of federal funds being requested and for costs related to all planning period tasks associated with the local evaluation.” Thus, a local evaluation budget may have costs identified for (a) staffing, (b) subcontract agreements, and (c) other direct costs.

Budgeting: Incentives

Are participant incentives an allowable budget expense?

Maybe. Consistent with the requirements listed in Section V.1. Criteria, Budget and Budget Justification (and in other sections of the FOA) all project costs (including incentives) must be “allowable, reasonable, allocable, necessary, and commensurate with the types and range of activities and services to be conducted, the number of participants to be served, and the expected goals and objectives.” Applicants are encouraged to review the cost principles appropriate for their organizational type:

- OMB Circular A-122 PART 230 - Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations Appendix B to Part 230-Selected Items of Cost.
- OMB Circular B-87 PART 225 - Cost Principles for State, Local & Indian Tribal Government Appendix B to Part 225-Selected Items of Cost.

Budgeting: Limits

Is there a recommended % of total budget or amount for evaluation for the grants?
While there is no recommended percentage, the FOAs set specific limits on budgets for local evaluations, based on the total grant funding. Section II of the Healthy marriage and Relationship Education and New Pathways for Fathers and Families FOAs, Federal Award Information, specifies that:

- Applicants requesting funding levels between $350,00 and $699,999 are expected to allocate at least $35,000 per year for a **descriptive** local evaluation, but no more than 10 percent of the total budget.
- Applicants requesting funding levels between $700,000 and $999,999 are expected to allocate at least $100,000 per year for a **descriptive or impact** local evaluation, but no more than 15 percent of the total budget for either evaluation.
- Applicants requesting funding levels between $1,000,000 and $2,000,000 are expected to propose an **impact** evaluation and allocate at least 10, but no more than 20 percent per year, if proposing a randomized-controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation.

For ReFORM applicants, the FOA states, “Applicants are expected to propose either a descriptive or an impact evaluation and to allocate at least 10 percent, but no more than 15 percent of their total annual funding for local evaluation.”

Conflict of Interest

Please explain "conflict of interest."
A conflict of interest may mean many things. An example of a conflict of interest would be if a local evaluator may financially benefit if the results of a study s/he oversees are positive.

Consent

Is fully informed consent necessary for all participants in all types of evaluations?
Yes, local evaluations will need to obtain consent from every participant (regardless, for example, if the evaluation is an impact or descriptive local evaluation).

Data Collection Instruments

For comparison group data collection, could we prepare a separate survey with the same questions as the program group?
Yes, though the exact data collection procedures should be informed by the research question(s) and research design. The FOAs state, "Applicants must propose a specific research design in their plans, including details regarding: staffing; timeline; recruitment of participants; planned sample size; measures (including any measures in addition to the required performance measures); data collection methods, including who will collect data (staff, partner agencies, and/or local or other subcontracted evaluators); and analyses methods to be used. If multiple waves of data collection will be conducted, applicants must describe the timing of those waves, and how respondents will be tracked over time for later data collection."

Impact Evaluation Requirement for Complementary Implementation/Process Evaluation

Should we propose on doing BOTH impact and implementation/process evaluations?
If you are proposing an impact evaluation, yes, should propose an impact evaluation and a complementary implementation/process study. The FOAs state, "Applicants that propose to conduct an impact evaluation must have and describe a comparison group who does not receive the services of interest and that is comparable (at baseline, i.e., before a program begins) to those who participate in the service program. In addition to evaluation of impacts on specific outcomes, applicants proposing impact evaluations must also include an examination, in close detail, of the function and form of different parts of service process (i.e., “implementation study” or a “process study”)." This may seem contradictory to another part of the FOAs, specifically, that FOAs only permit one study per application: “applicants must propose a descriptive local evaluation plan or an impact local evaluation plan (in accordance with the funding level requested), which will answer one or more grantee-specific research question(s).” However, the implementation/process study is intended to be complementary to

the impact evaluation, to inform end-readers about what exactly the intervention is that was tested in the impact evaluation.

If we are doing an RCT impact study of a question about implementation factors, do we need to conduct a second RCT on a different question?
Impact evaluations of implementation factors are permitted; for example, the FOAs state that example priority topic areas for research investigation include “recruitment and program participation” and “program supports,” which may be considered implementation factors and could be the subject of an impact evaluation. Thus, a second RCT on a different question would not be required. While the impact evaluation would focus on the impact of changing the implementation factors (e.g. changing them in a randomized way); the complementary implementation/process study would detail the implementation factors being examined by the impact evaluation.

IRB: Pre-Award

Do applicants need to obtain IRB approval prior to submitting their grant applications?
No, applicants do not need to obtain IRB approval prior to grant submissions; IRB review and approval is not expected as part of the application. The FOAs state that “Applicants must identify the IRB they expect to use and must demonstrate a familiarity with that IRB's procedures and review.”

My organization is planning on proposing a descriptive evaluation. Will we need IRB approval?
All grantees will need to seek IRB approval for their local evaluations, whether they are descriptive or impact studies. The FOAs state that "Applicants must identify the IRB they expect to use and must demonstrate a familiarity with that IRB's procedures and review requirements" (the FOAs do not excuse those proposing descriptive evaluations from this requirement, thus, those proposing descriptive evaluations must identify the IRB they expect to use and must demonstrate familiarity with that IRB’s procedures and review requirements).

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IRB: Post-Award

How will IRB approval be obtained by organizations that do not have an active IRB process in place?

Most HMRF organizations do not have an IRB in place. The FOAs state, "Applicants must identify the IRB they expect to use and must demonstrate a familiarity with that IRB's procedures and review requirements." The FOAs also state, "During the planning period or afterwards, grantees will be required to obtain a Federal-wide Assurance (for more information, see http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/assurances/filasurt.html) and submit their research projects to an IRB. Given this grant program's requirement for collecting and reporting data on performance measures and for local evaluation, it is highly likely that most grantees will either need IRB approval for collecting performance measures and evaluation data or a waiver from an IRB stating that such approval is not needed. Often local programs use the IRBs of their local evaluators, partner universities, or evaluation organizations to provide oversight. IRBs provide guidance regarding participant privacy and rights. General information about the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations can be obtained at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/. Applicants also may contact the Office for Human Research Protections by email at ohrp@csophs.dhhs.gov, or by phone at (240) 453-6900."

Local Evaluator: Evaluator from the Same University

If the applicant is a University, can their evaluator be someone from their own University?

Yes, but only if the grant applicant (and, if awarded, grantee) demonstrates that there is true independence between the program and the evaluator, and if safeguards are put place to ensure continuing independence of the evaluation. For example, the implementing and evaluating groups must hail from completely different schools within the university.

Local Evaluator: Geographic Proximity

Does a local evaluator need to be in close geographic proximity to the grantee?

No, a local evaluator does not need to be geographically close to the grantee, nor does the local evaluator need to be within the same state. The term "local evaluator" is used to differentiate (a) evaluators partnering with grantees on their local evaluations from (b) evaluators leading one of the federal evaluations.

Local Evaluator: In-house Evaluator

Our organization has an in-house evaluator. Can that person serve as the local evaluator or do we need someone outside of our organization?

No, in general such a local evaluator would not be permitted, because the organization may have a vested interest in the results of the study, even the results of a descriptive study. The grant applicant (and, if awarded, grantee) must demonstrate that there is true independence between the program and the evaluator, and that safeguards are put in place to ensure continuing independence of the evaluation. For example, the evaluator or evaluating group must demonstrate that there will be no financial benefit to it or to the organization from results of the study.

What do you mean by if using an internal evaluator from another department in your agency, you must not show any economic benefit for your agency -- certainly the agency would receive remuneration for the evaluator's time in doing the evaluation?

Yes, local evaluators will be paid by the grantee for their work on the evaluation. However, the local evaluator or evaluating group must demonstrate that there will be no financial benefit to it or to the organization from **results** of the study.

Local Evaluator: Multiple Roles for the Same Person

Can a grant applicant also serve as the local evaluator?

One person or entity could be both a grantee and a local evaluator, but they may not be both on the same grant. So, a university could serve as a local evaluator on one grant and simultaneously implement a separate grant: however, the two grants must be demonstrably separate, in order to maintain the independence of the local evaluator. Importantly, note that the FOAs state that the Project Director must be a dedicated Project Director on the grant: thus, it is not possible that a person could be both a Project Director on one grant and a local evaluator on another.

Local Evaluation Measures: Going beyond Performance Measures

Do we need to propose measures outside of performance measures for our local evaluations, or can we rely on just the performance measures?

You will likely need measures (in addition to or in place of the pre- and post-tests) for your local evaluations. The FOAs state "Applicants must propose a specific research design in their plans, including details regarding: staffing; timeline; recruitment of participants; planned sample size; measures (**including any measures in addition to the required performance measures**) …." The Appendix in the FOAs states, "Performance measures, which are required to be collected at program entry and exit, may be considered part of your data collection plan." Thus, it is implied that measures other than, or complementary to, the performance measures should be employed in the local evaluations.

It appears the pre/post-tests administered through nForm are program-wide general statements relating to HM and RF. Is it in the local evaluation that a grantee would include any curriculum-specific pre/post-tests and provide results and narratives?

Perhaps, but not necessarily: the local evaluations may be separate from any additional pre/post-tests (e.g., curriculum-specific pre/post-tests). The FOAs note that "applicants must propose a descriptive local evaluation plan or an impact local evaluation plan (in accordance with the funding level requested), which will answer one or more grantee-specific research question(s)": thus, the local evaluations are focused on a specific research question(s), which may or may not involve the curriculum-specific pre/post-tests. With regard to curriculum-specific pre/post-tests, nothing in the FOAs prohibits inclusion of additional data collection instruments.

One Local Evaluation Permitted

Is there a limit on the number of evaluations (impact and/or process evaluations) we can propose (e.g., one each on two programs we're proposing, or one with each of two different partners)?

The FOAs state "Grantees are expected to conduct either a descriptive or impact local evaluation," so only one local evaluation may be proposed (the FOAs also state, "grantees are expected to conduct grantee-specific evaluations, called "local evaluations" to answer one or more grantee-specific research questions," so multiple research questions could be answered with one local evaluation). While many research designs are possible, the FOA states that

"Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)."

Performance Measures/nFORM and Local Evaluation Data

For projects using an evaluation design that includes a comparison or control group, are grantees expected to collect performance measures with individuals in the comparison/control group? May they use nFORM to collect those data?

In all cases, grantees are required to ask participants in the program group to complete the nFORM performance measures data (though participants can refuse to answer questions). The performance measures in nFORM may also be used to collect data from control/comparison group participants, depending on the research design proposed. While many research designs are possible, the FOA state that "Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)."

Who should collect the nFORM data if it's a part of a local evaluation?

The nFORM data may be collected by local evaluator staff or grantee staff. The approach depends on the local evaluation proposed. Whether the pre- and post-tests will be used in the local evaluation will depend on the research questions and design proposed. While many research designs are possible, the FOA states that "Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)."

Are the data collection requirements the same for the performance measures and the local evaluations?

No, the data collection requirements are different for the performance measures and for the local evaluations. Please see the subheading "Program Performance Evaluation Plan" in Section IV.2 of the FOAs for information on the performance measures, and see the subheading "Funded Activities Evaluation Plan" in Section IV.2 of the FOAs for information on local evaluations.

Will the data from the local evaluations also be stored on nFORM?

Not necessarily. If local evaluations include performance measures as part of the data for research, then, yes, data for those measures will be in nFORM. However, any data collection separate from the performance measures will not be stored in nFORM.

Is there a way to leave control group data out of the PPR reports, if no services are received?
nFORM will allow grantees to designate certain clients as members of the control group. The system will then allow the same collection of data on the control group member as a client in the program group. That is, nFORM can be used to store data on control members' surveys (applicant characteristics, pre-test, and post-test) or on services the program provided (for example, if an evaluation is comparing a low-intensity and high-intensity version of services). If the control group does not receive any services from the program, members of the control group will not be included in nFORM's calculations for the PPR or QPR.

Roles

Are there specific roles for staff in local evaluations, e.g. for data collection, or for analysis?
No, the FOAs do not specify roles. The FOAs state, "Applicants must propose a specific research design in their plans, including details regarding: staffing; … data collection methods, including who will collect data (staff, partner agencies, and/or local or other subcontracted evaluators); and analyses methods to be used." The FOAs also state, "Applicants must identify the local evaluator or local evaluator organization and include a signed letter of agreement with this local evaluator. … For every organization involved

(including local evaluator and partners), applicants must include letters of agreement supporting the plan and outlining roles and responsibilities."

Staff Qualifications

Are there specific qualifications that MUST be met for the evaluation team members?
No, the FOAs do not list specific qualifications. The FOAs do state, with regard to performance measures, "Applicants must address their readiness to collect performance measure data, including readiness of staff to collect data – that is, applicants must describe staff qualifications and training," and, with regard to local evaluations, "Applicants must include curriculum vitae for the leader of the research project (i.e., Principal Investigator or Research Project Director)."

Research Design: General

We're thinking about a specific research design. Would you be able to tell us if our design is appropriate or acceptable?

We cannot provide help with a specific application (applicants may be considering a range of designs, and we cannot assist everyone in developing their designs). Please consult with your local evaluator and/or investigate existing literature, and propose the design that is best-suited to answer your research questions, as the FOAs state, "Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)."

Research Design: Eligible Designs by Funding Tier, and Eligibility for Bonus Points

Is it possible to propose an RCT if we are applying for less than $700,000, in order to obtain the 5 bonus points?

Applicants must follow the parameters regarding the type of local evaluation required and appropriate allocation of funding depending upon the amount requested contained in the FOAs. Per Section II, Federal Award Information, in the FOAs, applicants applying for funding between $350,000 and $699,999 may only propose descriptive evaluations and, therefore, are not eligible for bonus points.

Research Design: Evaluating a Component of, and Not a Whole, Program

If we are proposing a multi-component program (or if we are planning to serve more than one population, or provide more than one program, or conduct activities in more than one allowable activity in HMRE), does the local evaluation need to be about all services (i.e. the whole program) or can it be about a part of the program?

The local evaluation may be about a component of the program (or one population, or one program, or one [or more] activity[ies]). The FOAs state: "applicants must propose a descriptive local evaluation plan or an impact local evaluation plan (in accordance with the funding level requested), which will answer one or more grantee-specific research question(s)." Therefore, it is within the bounds of the FOA to propose to answer just one research question. It is thus reasonable to assume that the local evaluation could just focus on one programming component of a multi-component grant. For example, the FOAs list examples of priority topic areas for research investigation, and the second bullet includes: "Programming - whether certain program components or program structures, variations in the intensity and duration of programming, or modifications to increase cultural competency are linked to better outcomes for participants;" thus, a local evaluation may focus on one (or more) program component(s).

If an organization has such a large number of participants that it would be too expensive to conduct research on all of them - can it do a randomly selected percentage of the participants - or does it have to do research on all participants?
Nothing in the FOAs states that all participants must be part of a local evaluation.

Research Design: Qualitative Designs

Do qualitative designs qualify for descriptive studies?
Yes, qualitative designs may be considered: the FOAs provide information on the kinds of descriptive studies that applicants may propose: "Applicants that propose to conduct descriptive evaluations must use data and analysis to describe and explain the importance/implications of the program's processes (such as a process or program implementation study) and/or the program's population (such as a pre-post study)": thus, any proposed design, including qualitative studies, must meet these standards.

Research Design: Quasi-experimental Designs

Will quasi experimental evaluations meet the threshold for impact evaluations for top tier grants, even though it is not as rigorous as random assignments?
Each local evaluation proposal, including quasi-experimental design studies, will be judged on its own merits, per the guidelines in the FOAs. For example, the FOAs state, "Applicants that propose to conduct an impact evaluation must have and describe a comparison group who does not receive the services of interest and that is comparable (at baseline, i.e., before a program begins) to those who participate in the service program."

Review of Proposed Applications

Who will review the proposed evaluation designs and the associated budget?
Grant application review panels will review proposed local evaluations and budgets.

Sample Size for Impact Evaluations

Is there a minimum or recommended sample size for impact evaluations?
We cannot provide help with a specific application (applicants may be considering a range of designs, including a range of sample sizes, and we cannot assist everyone in developing their designs). Please consult with your local evaluator and/or investigate existing literature, and propose the design and sample size that is best-suited to answer your research questions, as the FOAs state, "Applicants must propose a specific research design in their plans, including details regarding: ... planned sample size;" and "Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s)."

Technical Assistance for Local Evaluations

Have you given thought to providing TA for sites that want to merge local and federal data in their impact analysis? i.e., to use both sources of data in their impact analysis
We are preparing to provide technical assistance to a limited number of grantees regarding their local evaluation efforts.

Timeline for Local Evaluations

If our impact evaluation begins in year 2, if we have an adequate sample after two years, do we need to continue recruiting beyond year three or could years 4 and 5 be used for reporting of findings and follow-up?
You may or may not need to continue recruiting beyond year three, depending on your design: the FOAs state that applicants must discuss the timing of the local evaluations: "Applicants must propose a specific research design in their plans, including details regarding: ... timeline ..."

Miscellaneous: Data Sharing Mechanisms

What are the data sharing mechanisms in place to reduce burden to program participants if the local evaluator intends to collect some of the same data as the federal evaluator?
There are no data sharing mechanisms in place.

Miscellaneous: Physiological Outcomes

Would it be acceptable to examine physiological outcomes among the participants?
In general, yes, depending on the research question(s) and design.

Miscellaneous: Piloting

During year 1, after the 9 month planning period, could the remaining 3 months be used for pilot testing of recruitment for an RCT intervention?
A final decision about piloting won't be made until after award of grants. Note that the FOAs state that, "The first 9 months of the grant can be used as a planning period, including the refinement of a research plan. Grantees and their local evaluators are required to work with ACF to refine, improve, develop or select assessments, **pilot (if possible),** and make necessary changes to the evaluation design/methods."

Miscellaneous: Wild Cards (in Evaluations of Re-entry Programs)

Reentry participants are often required by probation to attend some type of community services. Our program is one of many options. Attendance is voluntary. Would Mathematica's guidance put these individuals into "wild card" status for evaluation?
All services offered by the next round of HMRF grantees will be voluntary. However, some clients may be mandated by a court or other authorities to attend services that are like the HMRF grant programs: for example, sometimes clients are given lists of available programs that meets mandatory attendance requirements, and these lists include specific HMRF grant programs; such clients will be still be part of the performance measure data collection. These clients could also be included in some types of local evaluations, such as studies in which two types of services are being compared. However, such clients may not be eligible for a local evaluation that assesses the program relative to a no-services control group. With a randomized controlled trial (in which the control group does not receive program services), clients mandated to receive services should be exempted from random assignment (sometimes known as "**wild cards**").

As with all local evaluation designs, we cannot provide help with a specific application (applicants may be considering a range of designs, and we cannot assist everyone in developing their designs). Please consult with your local evaluator and/or investigate existing literature, and propose the design that is best-suited to answer your research questions, as the FOAs state, “Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s).”

Federally-led Evaluations

Recruitment and Randomization: Timing

Do all participants need to be recruited before random assignment, or can they be selected from small batches?

The answer depends on whether you are referring to local evaluations or federally-led evaluations.

For proposed local evaluations, the timing of recruitment and randomization will depend on the research question(s) and research design proposed. We cannot provide help with a specific application (applicants may be considering a range of designs, and we cannot assist everyone in developing their designs). Please consult with your local evaluator and/or investigate existing literature, and propose the design that is best-suited to answer your research questions, as the FOAs state, “Applicants must include a justification for why the proposed research design is best suited to answer the research question(s).”

Selection of Grantees to Participate in the Federally-led Evaluations

How many grantees will be selected for the federally-led evaluations? The FOA states 53 awards.

ACF anticipates awarding approximately 53 HMRE grants. From these grantees, approximately 6 will be selected for the federally-led evaluation of HMRE programs called “Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services,” or “STREAMS.”

ACF anticipates awarding approximately 49 RF grants, and 5 ReFORM grants. From these grantees, approximately 6 will be selected for the federally-led evaluation of RF/ReFORM programs called “Building Bridges and Bonds,” or B3.

Will the grantees selected to be part of the federally-led evaluations be selected randomly from the entire pool of grantees?
No: the federal evaluation contractors will have conversations with a limited number of grantees, in order to select those that best meet the aims of the federally-led evaluations.

Must grantees wait to be chosen to participate in the federally-led evaluations?
Yes: we are anticipating a process of reviewing awarded applications and holding discussions with a selected number, in order to select a small sub-set for the federally-led evaluations. Please see the webinar on federally-led evaluations for more information.

If you are interested in sharing information about your existing or planned RF or ReFORM program with the federally-led evaluation contractor, please contact the research contractor at b3@mdrc.org.

If you are interested in sharing information about your existing or planned HMRE program with the federally-led evaluation contractor, please contact the research contractor at streams@mathematic-mpr.org.

Targeted Sample Size

What is the target number of participants sites should be able to reach each year for STREAMS?
For STREAMS, target sample sizes will depend on the specific research designs selected. Those specific research designs have not yet been determined.

For B3, is the total target for the study 500 participants per grantee? Would more be required for the control group?
B3 is targeting 500 participants per grantee: this means, for example, 250 in the program group, and 250 in the comparison group. The anticipated design for B3 means that grantees will work with both program and comparison group participants.

If we are serving lower than 500 fathers, should we still apply for a grant? Does this mean that agencies that plan to serve 150 to 200 fathers should not apply for this grant?
The sample goal expressed during the webinar was an estimate, and was used with regard to sample sizes for the federally-led evaluations, not for the RFHM grant programs in general.

Thus, **please do not avoid submitting an application if you don't meet this threshold**. Please consider your program and proposed approach in developing your target service population, separate from this number.

With regard to the federally-led evaluations, we are open hearing from any program that is interested in B3, even if they currently serve or plan to serve fewer than 500 annually. Sites that aren't currently meeting that threshold are not precluded from contacting the research contractor. This way the research contractor can learn more about your organization to help determine whether your site may be a fit once the application period closes.

Types of Programs under Consideration

Were youth-serving organizations included in past federal evaluations, and will they be included this time?

The federal government has not evaluated the effectiveness of youth-serving Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) programs to date. Grantees implementing such programs may be included in the next federally-led evaluation of HMRE programs.

Volunteering to Participate in Federally-Led Evaluations

May applicants/grantees request to be a part of a federally-led evaluation?

Yes. The FOAs state, "Applicants may include a written statement indicating that they have a particular interest in participating in or being selected for the federal evaluation (a local evaluation plan is still required of these applicants), and may briefly mention specific program enhancements that they would be interested in adding to their program to be included the federal evaluation." Additionally, the FOAs state that applications must confirm the applicant's understanding that, "the federal government may incorporate the local evaluation into the federally led evaluation; the federal government may waive the local evaluation requirement; or the local evaluation may continue in parallel to the federal evaluations."

If you are interested in sharing information about your existing or planned RF or ReFORM program with the federally-led evaluation contractor, please contact the research contractor at b3@mdrc.org.

If you are interested in sharing information about your existing or planned HMRE program with the federally-led evaluation contractor, please contact the research contractor at streams@mathematic-mpr.org.

May applicants/grantees request to be a part of a federally-led evaluation and to conduct their own local evaluation?

Yes, applicants (and eventual grantees) may make this request. However, the decisions regarding whether a grantee will participate in a federally-led evaluation, and what will happen with a local evaluation if a grantee is selected for a federally-led evaluation (see next FAQ), will be made by ACF.

What Happens to the Local Evaluation if a Grantee Is Selected for a Federally-led Evaluation?

If a grantee is selected to participate in a federal evaluation, does that eliminate the local evaluation? Will the local evaluator still be involved and will he or she still receive the consultation fee contracted in the proposal?

The FOAs state that applications must confirm the applicant's understanding that, "the federal government may incorporate the local evaluation into the federally led evaluation; the federal government may waive the local evaluation requirement; or the local evaluation may continue in parallel to the federal evaluations." The role of the local evaluator, if any, will depend on how the federal government chooses to incorporate, waive, or permit the local evaluation. It seems prudent to tailor agreements, including fees, so that they are responsive to the range of possible scenarios.

Other Questions

Answers to Additional Questions

How can I get answers to additional questions that I may have?

Please contact the Agency Contact noted in Section VII of the applications.

Archived Webinars

I was unable to attend the webinars. Can I still access the information that was presented in each of the webinars?

Yes, recordings of all webinars and the slides will be archived and posted to the www.famlecross-site.info website at http://www.famlecross-site.info/Webinars.html.

Existing Studies and Evidence

I am interested in research on participant retention in Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs. Are there any existing studies and/or research that have shown findings related to participant retention?

We cannot provide help with a specific application or information on specific programmatic topics or approaches. Please investigate existing literature and include it, as appropriate, in your application.

Is ACF thinking of starting an evidence based list of healthy marriage and fatherhood programs like NREPP at SAMHSA?

Although we can't discuss any future plans, please review the existing review of the HM and RF evidence base at http://familyreview.acf.hhs.gov/.

Cross-site Evaluation

Will there be a cross-site evaluation and will only certain grantees be selected for cross-site analyses?

Yes, there will be a cross-site evaluation. All grantees will be included in this cross-site analysis of performance measures. The FOAs state, "Cross-site analyses will further describe programming and outcomes across the grant program." Please see the homepage of the www.famlecross-site.info website for a short description of intended cross-site analyses.

How will the open ended questions asked of all grantees be analyzed?

The specific approaches for analyses have not yet been determined.