Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI)
Opportunity to Participate in the TELI Collaborative or Network

Background

Early childhood and other family-serving programs, including Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start, and the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs, often operate independently in silos, with different funding sources, requirements, policies, and leadership structures. The leadership and staff for these programs may not be collaborating, and as a result, they may miss opportunities to work together that would lead to greater efficiencies, higher quality services, and better outcomes for Native children. Tribal communities and their leadership often indicate investment in Tribal capacity to foster more integrated early childhood programs and systems is needed but the capacity, support, and resources to do so are limited. Through the Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI), Tribes have an opportunity to leverage resources and receive technical assistance support to invest in coordinated early childhood systems in a focused and intentional way, fostering collaboration across child and family serving programs.

Since 2012, ACF has partnered with three cohorts of Tribes to carry out the TELI, which is designed to:

- Better coordinate Tribal early learning and development programs, including child care, Head Start, preschool, Tribal home visiting, and other child- and family-serving programs.
- Create and support seamless, high-quality early childhood systems through coordinated relationship building across partners.
- Raise the quality of services for children and families across the prenatal-to-kindergarten-entry continuum.
- Identify and break down barriers to collaboration, efficiency, and systems improvement.

New TELI Opportunity

ACF is pleased to offer Tribes a new opportunity to participate in TELI. Tribes interested in investing in early childhood systems building through the TELI have the opportunity to participate in one of two groups that differ in terms of the levels of commitment required from Tribes and the supports provided by ACF: 1) TELI Network and 2) TELI Collaborative. TELI activities will take place between January 2026 and December 2028. Applications to participate in these opportunities are due **October 31, 2025**.

- The **TELI Network** is an *optional* opportunity in which participating Tribes can access universal technical assistance to assist them in identifying and developing Tribal early childhood systems, but without the more intensive time commitment or individualized technical assistance that the TELI Collaborative partners (below) are receiving. Network partners will have access to the resources developed for, by, and shared with the TELI Collaborative. TELI Network partnerships must include at least one Administration for Children and Families (ACF) program partner (Head Start, Tribal CCDF, or Tribal MIECHV).

- The **TELI Collaborative** is an *optional* 3-year opportunity for intensive technical assistance designed to assist up to eight Tribal communities in developing their own unique early childhood system through participation in an intentional learning community. Tools and methods will be offered by ACF TELI Coordinators to enhance collaboration between programs. This is not a grant; it is an *optional* technical assistance opportunity in which Tribes can partner with ACF.

In addition to a broad focus on collaboration and systems building across programs serving young children and families, as in past cohorts of TELI, participants in the upcoming cohort of the TELI Collaborative will have an opportunity to incorporate activities that facilitate Native children's and families' access to healthy and nutritious foods (including traditional foods) in early childhood, community, and home settings. While there will be an additional focus on improving nutrition and food security, we will continue to respect each Tribe's sovereignty and decisions to carry out and implement their unique priorities to strengthen the early childhood system in their community.

TELI Collaborative partnerships must include at least one Administration for Children and Families (ACF) program partner (Head Start, Tribal CCDF, or Tribal MIECHV) and at least one program partner focused on nutrition and/or children's healthy development.

Participation in the TELI Network

Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies may indicate interest in participating in the Network through their Tribal CCDF Plan submission. Other Tribal early childhood programs may request participation in the TELI Network by contacting tribalecd@acf.hhs.gov by **October 31, 2025**.

Participation in the TELI Collaborative

Please sign and submit this Statement of Interest, Support, and Commitment if you would like to participate in the ***TELI Collaborative***. Tribes interested in the TELI Collaborative will:

- Demonstrate a commitment to involving Tribal leaders, key Tribal early childhood program leaders (including child care, Head Start and/or home visiting, as applicable), and one representative from a program or partnership focused on nutrition and/or children's healthy development in the TELI work.
- Develop early childhood systems in collaboration with community members, parents, Elders, and families.
- Commit to working in partnership with ACF to develop and implement TELI work plans developed by community teams and learn from one another to maximize opportunities to implement strong early childhood systems.

Up to **8 Tribes** will participate in the TELI Collaborative, and these Tribes will receive intensive technical assistance (TA) support over a 3-year period, including:

- Ongoing TA as part of a peer learning network/learning collaborative. TA and resources will be provided to the group as well as to the individual Tribal communities.
- TA to support Tribes in intentionally aligning internal and external resources to develop early childhood systems that include health and nutrition services, programs, and partnerships.
- Direct support from federal staff and decision-makers across the three key ACF Tribal early childhood programs (as applicable), as well as other relevant federal partners as available.
    - ACF is committed to ensuring that federal program specialists collaborate across offices and provide guidance to facilitate early childhood systems building.

- Periodic meetings (as funding allows) to bring all 8 collaboratives together to establish and maintain the learning collaborative, support ongoing peer learning and sharing, and receive TA and guidance.
- A joint site visit to each Tribe (when permissible) from ACF staff representing the relevant programs to explore opportunities for collaboration and to identify and address barriers to coordination and systems building.

TELI Collaborative Statement of Interest, Support, and Commitment

The due date for this TELI Collaborative Statement of Interest, Support, and Commitment is **October 31, 2025.**

Participation in the TELI Collaborative is completely **voluntary**. Submitting this Statement of Interest, Support, and Commitment indicates that a Tribe is interested in participating in the Collaborative. The responses to the questions are solely intended to be used by ACF to inform the types of supports needed by Tribes. If you are interested in participating in the TELI Collaborative, please submit this document to tribalecd@acf.hhs.gov by **October 31, 2025**.

ITEM 1: Background, Goals, and Context

Please gather your potential partners to jointly respond (as indicated through signatures below) to the following questions (no more than 2-3 pages).

1. Why is your Tribe or organization interested in the TELI Collaborative intensive TA opportunity?

2. What are your Tribe or organization's goals around coordinating and integrating your early childhood programs? What are your particular goals around food security, nutrition, and children's healthy development?

3. What are the resources or strengths your Tribe or organization possesses that will be an asset to the success of the TELI in your community, and to the TELI Collaborative overall?

4. What are some opportunities and challenges to collaboration across the early childhood programs in your community, including food/nutrition partners?

5. Please describe the level of commitment and investment of each of the individual programs and partners that will be participating in your TELI project. What is/will be each partner's role in making your TELI project successful?

6. Please identify examples of technical assistance you would like to receive as part of your participation in the TELI Collaborative. Technical assistance could be peer sharing opportunities with other Collaborative partners, assistance in identifying approaches to working with early childhood partners within your Tribe, specific methods to engage food/nutrition partners, support around engaging families and community members in TELI activities, and strategies around goal setting and early childhood systems integration.

ITEM 2: Demonstration of Support from Tribal or Organizational Leadership

Please attach a demonstration of support from Tribal or organizational leadership (could be a Tribal resolution or some other letter of support) for the community(ies)'s participation in the TELI Collaborative. If more than one community will be involved, the statement should indicate support from the leadership of all participating communities.

ITEM 3: Statement of Commitment

By submitting our Statement of Commitment to participate in the TELI Collaborative, we understand that cooperation, partnership, and collaboration between the participating Tribal programs will be essential in creating and supporting seamless quality early childhood programs and systems serving young children and families within our community. We are committed to working together. Our signatures below indicate that we have responded to the TELI Collaborative questions jointly and agree to work as a team to achieve our goals. The individuals signing this document will constitute the Core TELI Team. This Core Team will work with ACF TELI staff to identify and engage additional partners, as appropriate.

Child Care and Development Fund (as applicable)

Name	Title
Signature	Date

Head Start (as applicable)

Name	Title
Signature	Date

Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (as applicable)

Name	Title
Signature	Date

Food/Nutrition Partners

Name | Title

Signature | Date

Other Partners (as applicable)

Name | Title

Signature | Date

Name | Title

Signature | Date

Name | Title

Signature | Date