



Preparing for Success: The Awardee Role in Identifying and Supporting Local Community Agencies to Provide MIECHV Services



The MIECHV's process for updating needs assessments provides awardees with information critical to identifying communities in need of home visiting services. Yet not all communities have the resources, capacity, or other supports needed to launch or expand home visiting programming, implement evidence-based home visiting models with fidelity, or meet MIECHV data collection and reporting requirements.

While many excellent resources exist that prepare local communities to apply for and launch or expand new programs, most ignore the unique role the awardee can play in supporting these efforts. This tip sheet highlights some important ways awardees can provide these supports. Specifically, it includes tips for working with local communities to identify, select, and build the capacities of local agencies to provide MIECHV services in areas identified as communities of need through the statewide needs assessment update.

- **Allocate sufficient resources at the state level to support an equitable and participatory selection process.** Before beginning the process of identifying, selecting, and supporting a new local implementing

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk pregnant women and parents with young children up to kindergarten entry. Home visiting helps prevent child abuse and neglect, supports positive parenting, improves maternal and child health, and promotes child development and school readiness.



[Visit the MIECHV Program website to learn more!](#)

agency (LIA), it is important for awardees to make sure they are appropriately staffed and funded to provide the supports needed by communities. Awardees' MIECHV grant applications and work plans should reflect ample time, staff, and funds for the process. Some preparation steps include the following:

- *Develop a work plan* that includes clear action steps, timelines, and persons responsible for carrying out all steps in the selection process.
- *Make sure there is enough funding allocated to support the work required for an effective, equitable, and participatory process.* As appropriate, include items in the budget such as fees for consultants, meeting space, and travel.
- *Assign a staff member to lead the selection process and oversee the work plan.* Select someone who can stay involved over the long term and participate in bringing the new or expanded agency up to speed. Make sure the lead person is well-grounded in taking an equity, diversity, and inclusion perspective and in leading a participatory process. Provide training as appropriate.
- **Explore the capacities of current LIAs to expand their services or begin services in another area.** Through subrecipient monitoring, awardees can develop a clear sense of the strengths and challenges faced by current LIAs, and whether they have the capacity to expand to another area. Explore what these agencies already know about home visiting services, whether they currently provide services to a similar population, whether they already have referral pipelines in place, and whether they have a strong track record of meeting federal funding requirements.
- **Develop a selection process that promotes community engagement and encourages capacity building.** This kind of process promotes collaboration and



equity, supports the development of community ownership, and is likely to result in stronger program implementation. It contributes to community buy-in and understanding of opportunities and challenges with MIECHV funding. Here are some ways awardees can help local communities create a structure that facilitates the involvement of a diversity of providers and families in planning and program implementation:

- *Make planning grants available* that potential LIAs can use to hire a consultant to organize planning activities, review data, analyze the different home visiting models, and work with community partners to develop the implementation plan.
- *Help communities set up a meeting schedule, clarify the roles and responsibilities of various partners, create a work plan, and identify lead facilitator(s) to guide the planning process.* Some smaller and less experienced communities might want to bring in an outside consultant to guide the planning process.
- **Develop a detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) that defines your expectations.** The RFP should provide clear planning guidelines and participation criteria, including specific expectations for including a diverse group of providers and families in the planning process. Suggestions for refining the RFP process include the following:
 - *Require communities to agree on a single applicant per community,* letting the local stakeholders work out for themselves which organization is best positioned to operate the MIECHV program. Most community partners will have worked with each other and, through negotiation, will be able to come to an agreement. Ask them to provide letters of support from these community partners, especially organizations from whom the LIA will receive referrals and ones to whom LIAs will refer participants.



- *Establish clear scoring criteria.* Criteria might include having a mission that aligns with that of MIECHV, demonstrating the capacity to meet MIECHV requirements related to data collection, having experience working with the population that will be served by the MIECHV program, and showing an ability to form partnerships.
- *Include planning time and a phased-in start-up process.* Implementation takes time. Allow agencies time for planning and start-up activities such as making sure they understand MIECHV requirements, hiring, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring they have the appropriate technology.

Note: In some communities, it may be more appropriate to use a simple “letter of interest” (rather than an RFP) to identify community organizations willing to engage in local planning and implementation of MIECHV. Community organizations in under-resourced, high-need areas may not have the resources or capacity to respond to a complex, detailed RFP. A “letter of interest” can help the awardee identify potential organizations that, with technical assistance and support, could be successful LIAs.

- **Be transparent about program expectations.** Operating a home visiting program is complex. Potential agencies need to understand the program and model requirements, as well as the requirements for operating a MIECHV program. It is also helpful to share common implementation challenges experienced by other LIAs and strategies for moving past them.
- **Help agencies realistically assess their capacity to operate a home visiting program.** One way to do this is by developing an assessment checklist to help LIAs identify the challenges they have encountered previously in serving families. This level of review will help them think through any changes to their organizational structure or additional partnerships they will need to make in order to successfully implement an MIECHV program. The checklist



can help agencies look at everything from their facilities to whether their policies and procedures are conducive to conducting a home visiting program. For example, because home visitors may set up appointments or keep in touch with the families they work with via text, an agency that doesn't allow staff to text with families may need to adapt its policies. Awardees can review the checklist with the LIA, identify capacity gaps, and develop a plan for building the needed capacities.

- **Support selected LIAs in finding an appropriate home visiting model.** Is it the right fit, given their community's needs and priorities? Does it support outcomes on performance measures that align with the community's needs? Does the model's target population match those needs? Are available staff equipped to implement the model? Do they have the right qualifications? Does the model provide ongoing technical assistance and implementation supports? In some cases—for example, if the model target population is not a match for the community—the awardee can help the agency select a different model that is a better fit. In other cases—for example, if the LIA staff lack requisite skills—the awardee can help the agency build its capacity, perhaps by providing training or forming a partnership with another organization.
- **Leverage state relationships to identify local partners and opportunities to build networks.** It is important for agencies implementing MIECHV programs to build partnerships and relationships with local providers before selecting or expanding an LIA. These include agencies that can serve as sources of referral to home visiting, such as WIC, healthcare providers, childcare providers, child welfare agencies, and agencies that can address the identified needs of home visiting families, such as diaper banks and agencies providing domestic violence or substance misuse supports and Part C services.



Awardees can support community-level partnership development in the following ways:

- *Work with the LIA to conduct a resource assessment to identify resource gaps and help identify potential partners who might fill them.* For instance, are there partners that can provide mental health counseling? Job training? Housing?
- *Identify key stakeholders at the state level, then connect the LIA with their local-level counterparts.* Many awardees establish memos of understanding with a range of state partners involved in the delivery of early childhood services. These partners offer a wealth of connections and resources that can be leveraged at the community level.
- *Help partners understand model requirements.* Potential referral partners should understand the enrollment criteria so they understand which clients will be eligible for services.
- **Facilitate relationship building among new and current LIAs.** Every state has LIAs that have been successful in implementing the MIECHV program. Help potential LIAs learn from others about implementation approaches that contribute to a successful MIECHV program by, for example, establishing a buddy program or creating opportunities for strong LIAs to mentor new communities.



Related Resources

[Assessing Community Readiness for Change: Increasing Community Capacity for HIV/AIDS Prevention](#)

Ethnic Studies Department, Colorado State University

This resource presents a community readiness model that supports the process of community change and helps users develop effective and culturally appropriate community-level strategies.

[Community Readiness: A Toolkit to Support Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Awardees in Assessing Community Capacity](#)

James Bell Associates

This resource outlines a process that agencies can use to assess community-level capacity and preparedness to meet the diverse needs of MIECHV-eligible families.

[Getting To Outcomes® for Home Visiting: How to Plan, Implement, and Evaluate a Program in Your Community to Support Parents and Their Young Children](#)

RAND Corporation

This resource presents a ten-step process agencies can use to empower groups to better plan, implement, and evaluate home visiting programs, with the goal of achieving the best possible outcomes.

[Tools for Planning Community Partnerships](#)

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

This resource outlines six steps to guide a planning process for engaging in community partnerships. It includes templates for highlighting community strengths identified through a community assessment, developing a plan of action, and drafting a memorandum of understanding.