



Action research project

One of the primary components of the APLD fellowship is the completion of an action research project (ARP). The ARP provides opportunities for fellows to have on-the-job experiences that build practice, research, and leadership skills.

The ARP is a process in which participants examine their own practice, systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. The plan-do-study-act framework is used to complete the action research project. Fellows will start the project at the beginning of the program and finalize it before the end of their fellowship.

The application process requires fellows to identify an issue or challenge related to adoption, guardianship or kinship that they would like to focus on for their action research project. The issue or challenge selected should be of great interest to the fellow and identified as a need within their state/tribe/territory/agency. It is critical to note that the proposed issue or challenge for the action research project may need to be adjusted after the fellow is accepted into the program.

Fellows will receive individualized assistance with their project throughout the program. This assistance will be provided by APLD staff and supplemented with support by their mentor at the state/tribe/territory/agency. Mentors will be critical in helping fellows obtain information, data, and access to individuals that can assist them in completing their ARP. At the conclusion of the fellowship, fellows will present their research project, including results achieved and lessons learned, during the in-person meeting.

The action research project will consist of the following components:

- Identification of the issue or challenge related to adoption, guardianship or kinship that the fellow would like to address (submitted during the application process)
- Obtaining data/information that sheds light on the issue or challenge (submitted after the in-person kick-off meeting)
- Development of a plan to address the identified issue or challenge (submitted after the in-person kick-off meeting)

After the data has been obtained and the plan submitted and approved, fellows will work on implementing their plan throughout the remainder of the fellowship.

Potential issues/challenges identified for action research projects

Listed below are some topics for action research projects that fellows can use as examples as they identify a need within their own state/tribe/territory/agency that they would like to address with their action research project.

- Cultural competency training for adoptive parents and/or adoption staff
- Strategies for successfully transitioning children into pre-adoptive homes and/or adoptive homes
- Processes to inform families of post adoption supports and/or services that exist within their community
- Recruitment of adoptive families
- Helping adoptive families understand the importance of and/or develop birth family connections
- Identifying characteristics of adoptive parents/guardians who are able to successfully care for older children
- Connecting prospective adoptive families/guardians with post adoption services prior to finalization
- Recruiting, developing, and supporting adoptive parents/guardians of color
- Empowering and including youth in their own permanency planning
- Involving foster care alumni in adoption practice (recruitment, development, support)
- Unique dynamics in adoptions/guardianships in rural geographic areas
- Understanding of disruption/dissolution (e.g., determining actual rates, understanding causes, etc.)
- Identifying characteristics of successful African American adoption initiatives, such as Adoption Advocacy and Bennett Chapel Adoption ministry, and how these programs can be expanded to other states