



USDA Participant Research Innovation Laboratory for Enhancing WIC Services

Fiscal Year 2018 Request for Applications

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Anticipated Award Date: August 31, 2018

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NOTE: Information italicized should be addressed/completed by the Program area. Information in black should not be changed. If additional information is required it may be added.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

On December 31, 2017, Grants.gov officially retired the legacy .PDF application package as a method to apply for a Federal grant. This changed the way many Grants.gov users completed and submitted their grant applications.

For information on Workspace application process, visit:

<https://grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Application Checklist

This application checklist provides a list of the required documents; however FNS expects that applicants will read the entire RFA prior to the submission of their application.

In order to apply, **at least four weeks** prior to submission, you must have:

- ☐ Obtained a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number;
- ☐ Registered the DUNS number into the System for Award Management (SAM); and,
- ☐ Registered in grants.gov.

When **preparing your application**, ensure:

- ☐ Your application format and narrative meet the requirements included in Section IV “Application and Submission Information,” including page limits, priorities outlined in Section X, and all necessary attachments.

When **preparing your budget**, ensure the following information is included:

- ☐ All key staff who are paid by this grant.
- ☐ The percentage of time the project director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents.
- ☐ Your organization’s fringe benefit amount along with the basis for the computation.
- ☐ The type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds.
- ☐ Itemized travel expenses (including type of travel), travel justifications and basis for lodging estimates.
- ☐ Types of equipment and supplies, justifications, and estimates, ensuring that the budget is in line with the project description.
- ☐ Information for all contracts and justification for any sole-source contracts.
- ☐ Justification, description and itemized list of all consultant services.
- ☐ Indirect cost information (either a copy of a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or if no agreement exists, the basis of the indirect costs requested). If none requested, please indicate this in the budget narrative.

When **submitting** your application, ensure you have submitted the following:

- ☐ SF-424 – [Application for Federal Assistance](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – [Budget Information and Instruction Form](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424B – [Assurances for Non-Construction Programs](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-LLL [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](#).
- ☐ Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire (in Appendix X)
- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF - Upload using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15)

When applicable, application packages are required to include the following documents:

- ☐ AD-3030 – [Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov).

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I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), is responsible for providing Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education (including breastfeeding promotion and support) for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. The legislative authority for this grant announcement is contained in the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 Section 17 (g) (5)¹ as amended and Section 1472 of the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, 7 U.S.C. 3318, codified at 7 CFR 2.19(a)(3)(x) in January 2009. Under this program, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture may award competitive grants and cooperative agreements for the support of research projects to further USDA food and nutrition assistance programs.

¹ http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Legislation/CNA_1966_12-13-10.pdf

This is an announcement of the availability of funds for one new cooperative agreement for FY 2018-2021 with a public or private academic research institution or other non-profit research organization. In this funding cycle, the USDA anticipates awarding up to \$2,000,000 in grant funding to support the creation of a Participant Research Innovation Laboratory to support and evaluate WIC local agency-initiated projects that design and implement strategies, including innovative tools and technical resources, to promote customer service surrounding WIC nutrition services which will contribute to retention of eligible participants. Developed strategies should focus on WIC service delivery sites or retail environments. Further, proposals should incorporate strategies that acknowledge the social and cultural diversity of WIC participants and those eligible for the Program.

Purpose

The purposes of this Request for Applications (RFA) are to:

- Provide background information and context related to the goals of this funding opportunity;
- Describe the type of cooperative agreement available;
- Describe which entities are eligible to apply for grant funds;
- Solicit funding applications from eligible entities;
- Describe the requirements for submitting a successful application;
- Describe how applications will be reviewed and selected; and,
- Describe the terms and conditions to which grantees must adhere.

This RFA intends to select one institution or organization (e.g. accredited university, non-profit research organization or center) to establish the USDA “Participant Research Innovation Laboratory (PRIL) for Enhancing Customer Service in WIC Services.” The role of the PRIL will be to support and evaluate local efforts to develop interactive tools, technical resources, or innovative solutions that improve customer service in WIC clinics and/or WIC retailers (referred to hereafter as WIC vendors) and ultimately encourage and improve retention of eligible children in WIC. Research projects will build on and improve our understanding of the diverse personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of those eligible for WIC services. Implemented strategies/solutions will be evaluated for their impact on participant satisfaction and retention, and other relevant measures, within the local agency setting. In addition, the Grantee will provide evaluation-related technical assistance to State and local WIC agencies carrying out similar interventions through WIC Special Project Grants or other awards.

Background

Established in 1974, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). WIC provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding

promotion and support, and referrals to health and other social services to participants at no charge. WIC serves low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk.²

WIC benefits include nutritious supplemental foods; nutrition education; breastfeeding promotion and support; and referrals to health care, social services, and other community providers for pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to their fifth birthday. For pregnant women, WIC seeks to improve fetal development and reduce the incidence of low birth weight, short gestation, and anemia through intervention during the prenatal period. For infants and children, WIC seeks to provide nutritious foods during a critical time of growth and development in order to prevent nutritional deficiencies, health problems and improve health status. For breastfeeding and postpartum women, WIC also seeks to improve dietary intake and promote and support breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding.³

One of the keys to WIC's ongoing success is the combination of the food package and nutrition services, including education, it provides in clinics to help participants use the benefits package effectively and improve nutrition and health behavior. Most participants redeem food benefits at WIC authorized vendors such as large, national chain grocery stores or supermarkets, small convenience stores, or stores that carry only WIC-approved items. WIC clinics and retail environments are the critical interfaces where program benefits, program participants, and key stakeholders that support WIC relationships interact.

Program Services at WIC Locations

Ninety WIC State Agencies (SAs) comprising 50 States, 34 Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs), American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands administer the program through approximately 1,836 local agencies (LAs) and 9,000 clinics.⁴ Program benefits such as nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care, social services, and other community providers are provided at many LAs and clinics across the country. Almost three quarters of service sites are located in health departments, health clinics or health centers, with fewer located in non-profit organizations (13%), social service agencies (7%) or hospitals (6%).⁵

² Food and Nutrition Service (2014). "Nutrition Program Facts: WIC – The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children." United States Department of Agriculture. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WIC-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

³ Thorn, B., Tadler, C., Huret, N., Trippe, C., Ayo, E., Mendelson, M., Patlan, K. L., Schwartz, G., & Tran, V. (2015). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2014. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0010. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Pg. 1.

⁴ Food and Nutrition Service (2014). "Nutrition Program Facts: WIC – The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children." United States Department of Agriculture. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WIC-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

⁵ USDA, FNS, Office of Research and Analysis, *National Survey of WIC Participants II Volumes I–IV*, by Gary Huang, Daniel M. Geller et al., ICF Macro. Project Officers: Karen Castellanos-Brown and Sheku Kamara, FNS, Alexandria, VA: 2012. Download full reports at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/>.

WIC-Authorized Vendors

In addition to the numerous services provided to families through the program, WIC LAs and clinics also provide food instruments (FI) to participants, based on their prescribed food packages,⁶ which are used to purchase nutritious supplemental foods at more than 43,000 authorized vendors.⁷ Vendors are “authorized by the State agency to provide authorized supplemental foods to participants under a retail food delivery system.”⁸ Participants also receive Cash Value Vouchers/Benefits (CVVs/CVBs) with a fixed dollar amount for purchasing fruits and vegetables. All prescribed food benefits come in the form of either a “paper voucher, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, or other document which is used by a participant to obtain authorized foods.”⁹

WIC Participants

By April 2014, the latest biennial WIC Participant and Program Characteristics Report (WIC PC 2014) stated that 53.3% of WIC participants (those persons on WIC master lists or persons listed in WIC operating files who are certified to receive WIC benefits in April 2014)¹⁰ were children (ages 1 to 4), with infants and women accounting for 23.0% and 23.6% of participants, respectively.¹¹ Women participants were categorized as pregnant (9.6%), postpartum (6.6%), or breastfeeding (7.4%). Further, more than 85% of pregnant women in WIC were between 18 and 34 years of age.¹² Among all WIC participants in WIC PC 2014, 58.7% were identified as White only, 20.3% as Black or African American only, 11.1% as American Indian or Alaska Native only, and 4.1% as either Asian only or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. In 2014, 41.6% of WIC participants were reported as Hispanic/Latino.¹³

Trends in Program Coverage

Using data from the American Community Survey, FNS estimated that the average monthly WIC-eligible population totaled 15.06 million in 2015.¹⁴ In an average month of 2015, WIC served an estimated 52.7% of those eligible for WIC. Coverage rates for WIC-eligible infants (77%) and non-breastfeeding women (89%) were highest among WIC participant subgroups in 2015. The coverage rate for WIC-eligible children was 44 percent.¹⁵ The preliminary estimate of

⁶ Food and Nutrition Service (2016). “WIC Food Packages – Maximum Monthly Allowances.” United States Department of Agriculture. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-food-packages-maximum-monthly-allowances>

⁷ Food and Nutrition Service. The Integrity Profile. FY 2016 data.

⁸ 7 C.F.R. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children §246.3

⁹ 7 C.F.R. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children §246.2

¹⁰ Thorn, B., Tadler, C., Huret, N., Trippe, C., Ayo, E., Mendelson, M., Patlan, K. L., Schwartz, G., & Tran, V. (2015). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2014. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0010. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Page ii.

¹¹ Ibid Page. iv.

¹² Ibid Page iv.

¹³ Ibid Page v.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support. National- and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligibles and Program Reach, 2015, by Carol Trippe, Christine Tadler, Paul Johnson, Linda Giannarelli, and David Betson. Project Officer: Grant Lovellette. Alexandria, VA: February 2018.

¹⁵ Ibid.

total average monthly participation of women, infants, and children in the program during fiscal year 2017 was about 7.3 million.¹⁶

Barriers to Enrollment and Continued Participation

The WIC program reaches millions of women, infants, and children at nutritional risk through its LAs, clinics, and authorized vendors. Despite this success, many individuals eligible for the program do not enroll, and many who have initially certified do not continue participation. Half of women surveyed between 2008 and 2009 for the Second National Survey of WIC Participants (NSWP-II) were first-time WIC participants.¹⁷ Of the first-time WIC participants who had previous pregnancies, the majority (61%) reported that the biggest factor affecting their participation earlier was that they didn't know about the program. Many women surveyed did not believe they qualified categorically (37%) or by income (27%). Other cited reasons for nonparticipation included WIC services taking "too long," lack of transportation to WIC clinics and sites, scheduling difficulties, and problems qualifying for benefits. Study participants (n = 2,532) also mentioned further reasons why others might not participate in WIC, including: no knowledge of WIC (26.3%); problems qualifying (17.8%); services take too long (10.5%); don't need food benefits (6.9%), lack of transportation (6.3%), difficulty keeping appointment (4.9%), immigration problems (4.6%), inconvenient hours/days (3.8%), language barriers (2.3%), limited waiting space (1.6%), don't like food selection (0.8%), lack of child care (0.6%), WIC foods hard to find on shelves (0.4%), WIC food stores inconvenient hours/days (0.3%), and other reasons (4.1%).

Women in the NSWP-II were also surveyed about their satisfaction with the food package benefits they receive. While the foods purchased through WIC benefits were highly rated, some survey respondents had not purchased certain WIC foods regularly. The most commonly cited reason for not redeeming food instruments was a dislike for a particular food, while others noted not needing a particular food item.¹⁸ An interim rule, implemented in 2009, revised regulations to WIC food packages in order to align them more closely with updated nutrition science and the infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as to provide culturally diverse food options.¹⁹

A final rule, published in 2014, clarified provisions set forth in the interim rule.²⁰ Some evidence suggests a high degree of satisfaction with revised food packages among WIC participants, yet opportunities to enhance the experience with these food packages remain. For example, a study

¹⁶ Food and Nutrition Service (2017). "WIC Program Participant and Costs: FY 1974 - 2016". United States Department of Agriculture. Data as of February 3, 2017. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>

¹⁷ USDA, FNS, Office of Research and Analysis. National Survey of WIC Participants II Volumes I-IV. by Gary Huang, Danielle M. Geller, et al., ICF Macro. Project Officers: Karen Castellanos-Brown and Sheku Kamara, FNS, Alexandria, VA: 2012.

¹⁸ Ibid. Page 35.

¹⁹ Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages; Interim Rule." 7 CFR Part 246, Part II.

²⁰ "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages; Final Rule," 7 CFR Part 246, Volume 79 Federal Register Number 42. Summary. March 4, 2014. Page 12274.

of nearly 3,000 California WIC participants reported that, while a majority of participants were satisfied with new WIC foods (91.3%) and the reduced amounts in the new food packages (82.7%), over 13% of participants reported difficulty using new checks.²¹ Qualitative focus groups with 74 WIC participants in Wisconsin also found general satisfaction with the revised food packages though some reportedly felt unprepared for the changes.²²

Redemption of food instruments at authorized vendors is a major part of participants' experiences using WIC. Most survey respondents rated the stores where they shop as either excellent, very good, or good, and factors that drive survey respondent's choice of where to shop included convenience/location, price/expense, product availability, and staff friendliness, among other factors.²³ Other behavioral economic work has explored how the process of shopping for WIC approved foods, notably dissatisfaction with available WIC-approved foods and locating those foods within stores, impacts client satisfaction with program experiences.²⁴ Formative qualitative work in Minnesota highlighted confusion and frustration among current and former WIC participants as they attempted shopping for WIC approved foods and negative interactions with cashiers at checkout.²⁵ Early, unpublished findings from a statewide effort in the southwestern United States revealed that many respondents said they would return to WIC if their grocery store/shopping experience was better and easier.

Earlier studies point to a range of participant perceptions and experiences about the clinic experience that may serve as barriers to program retention. Those studies identified confusion about eligibility, a reluctance to accept government assistance, enrollment problems, and negative perceptions about WIC clinic visits, including long wait times and poor treatment as potential barriers.²⁶ Reasons why enrolled mothers fail to retrieve their WIC food instruments from a clinic in New York City include time conflicts with jobs and issues related to transportation or illnesses.²⁷ NSWP-II found that while nutrition education occurs at almost all LAs, the format and time required for nutrition education contacts varies,²⁸ which might have an

²¹ Ritchie, L. D., Whaley, S. E., & Crocker, N. J. (2014). Satisfaction of California WIC participants with food package changes. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 46(3 Suppl), S71-S78.

²² Gleason, S., & Pooler, J. (2011). *The Effects of Changes in WIC Food Packages on Redemptions*. Alexandria, VA: Altarum Institute. Page 32.

²³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, National Survey of WIC Participants II: Participant Characteristics Report, by Daniel M. Geller, Ph.D., et al. Project Officer: Sheku G. Kamara, Ph.D., Alexandria, VA: 2010. Pgs. 32-40.

²⁴ Ammerman, A., De Marco, M., Harding, M., Hartman, T., & Rhode, J. (2015). Buying Wisely and Well: Managing WIC Food Costs While Improving the WIC Customer's Shopping Experience. Duke-UNC USDA Center for Behavioral Economics and Health Food Choice Research. Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University. www.BECCR.org. pages 1-6.

²⁵ Huynh, Denise. (2013). Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Awareness, Experience, and Access. Wilder Research. St. Paul, Minnesota. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/wic/wilder/report.pdf>. Page 26.

²⁶ Bryant, C., Lindenberger, J., Brown, C., Kent, E., Schreiber, J. M., Bustillo, M., & Canright, M. W. (2001). A social marketing approach to increasing enrollment in a public health program: A case study of the Texas WIC program. *Human Organization*, 60(3), 234-246.

²⁷ Rosenberg, T. J., Alperen, J. K., & Chiasson, M. A. (2003). Why do WIC participants fail to pick up their checks? An urban study in the wake of welfare reform. *American journal of public health*, 93(3), 477-481.

²⁸ Ibid.

impact on WIC participation if participants perceive the time commitment to be too great or burdensome. Exploring the benefits of or developing new technological innovations to WIC services could both directly address cited barriers to participation, such as time constraints, as well as enhance participant satisfaction with services provided and benefits experienced.

Retention & Participation

Many SAs are implementing strategies to increase retention, in particular child retention, in WIC site and retail environments. Sixty-four SAs had implemented a one-year certification option for children by 2015, which means that there are fewer visits to the clinic to determine eligibility to receive WIC benefits. Partnerships, memoranda of understanding, and other collaborations between WIC SAs and programs such as Head Start and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) have explored ways in which eligibility and enrollment procedures can be coordinated across programs.²⁹ Awareness campaigns have crafted information materials to inform WIC-eligible individuals about the benefits of WIC, using messaging crafted from formative research with current and former participants as well as WIC staff.³⁰ Participant-focused interventions in New York State explored how participant assistance during shopping experiences and food instrument utilization impacts retention rates among children, comparing control agencies with intervention agencies; tested strategies included a shopping orientation curriculum, pictorial foods card, and a guided shopping tour at local WIC vendors.³¹ Two intervention sites showed significant increases in paper food instrument utilization rates, and a number of vendors saw improvements in how often vendor staff had conflicts or disagreements with a WIC customer about invalid paper food instruments, distinguishing WIC “acceptable” from “not allowed” foods, and the availability and variety of WIC foods at their stores.³²

FNS-Funded Grants and Research

Since 2000, FNS has awarded WIC Special Project Grants, on a competitive basis through a Request for Applications (RFA), to State WIC Programs. These grants are awarded to fund innovative projects that have the potential to improve and enhance the WIC Program.³³ In 2016, awarded Special Project Grants focused on retention of children participating in WIC to six State Agencies (Georgia, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and Virginia).³⁴

²⁹ Martin, K. S., Wolff, M., Lonczak, M., Chambers, M., Cooke, C., & Whitney, G. (2014). Formative Research to Examine Collaboration Between Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children and Head Start Programs. *Maternal and child health journal*, 18(1), 326-332.

³⁰ Food and Nutrition Service (2014). “Summary of WIC State Agency Strategies for Increasing Child Retention.” United States Department of Agriculture. <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/ChildRetentionStrategiesReport.pdf>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sekhobo, J., Edmunds, L., & Peck, S. (2015). “2010 WIC Special Project Grant (WISP-10-NY) NY WIC Retention Promotion Study: Keep, Reconnect, Thrive.” New York State Department of Health.

³³ Food and Nutrition Service. “Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): WIC Special Project Grants.” Online. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-special-project-grants>. Accessed August, 14, 2017.

³⁴ Food and Nutrition Service. “FY 2016 WIC Special Project Grants: Full and Mini Grants.” <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/2016-wic-special-project-grants>. Accessed August, 14, 2017.

In 2017, the Special Project Grants focus on optimizing WIC service delivery, whereby grantees will test strategies to improve the delivery of WIC services and the customer experience in the program.³⁵ Four State Agencies were awarded grants in 2017. Full grants were awarded to Arizona WIC's test of online group nutrition education and Texas WIC's creation of an online 24/7 communicator called ChatBot. Mini grants were awarded to South Dakota to offer cooking classes at a local college and to Arkansas WIC to combine breastfeeding support in a healthy community coordinator program in a rural area of the state.³⁶

FNS also funds other WIC-focused innovative research. Previously, the *USDA Center for Collaborative Research on WIC Nutrition Education Innovations*³⁷ at the Baylor College of Medicine promoted innovative and high-quality research that designed, implemented, and evaluated WIC-based nutrition education interventions to improve nutrition behaviors; projects funded by this work included evaluating the effectiveness of two-way texting to mothers about breastfeeding education and communication with breastfeeding counselors, comparing online to clinic-based modes of nutrition education, promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption through online WIC nutrition education, and pediatric office-based interventions to strengthen parents' abilities to form realistic expectations and better recognize baby sleeping and crying patterns.^{38,39} The *Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center*⁴⁰ at the University of Kentucky aims to reduce child food insecurity by improving program coordination among USDA-FNS Child Nutrition and nutrition assistance programs including WIC. The *Center for Behavioral Economics and Healthy Food Choice Research*,⁴¹ a joint effort between Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, conducts behavioral economics research aimed at improving the food choices of SNAP and WIC participants. While related, it is expected that the work, products, and deliverables resulting from PRIL will be distinct from the work of these other research efforts. The goal of PRIL is to support and evaluate enhancements to WIC clinic services and/or retail experiences that are expected to *measurably* improve retention rates.

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Funding

³⁵ Food and Nutrition Service. "FY 2017 WIC Special Project Grants: Full and Mini Grants." <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/fy-2017-wic-special-project-grants> Accessed August 18, 2017.

³⁶ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2018/fns-000218>

³⁷ <https://www.bcm.edu/departments/pediatrics/sections-divisions-centers/childrens-nutrition-research-center/research/wic-nutrition-education>

³⁸ Cullen, K. W., Thompspon, D., Dave, J.M., Chen, A, White, M., Bradford, F. (2017). "The Center for WIC Nutrition Education Innovations at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, Baylor College of Medicine: Final Technical Report." <https://media.bcm.edu/documents/2017/50/bcm-wic-project-final-report-071117.pdf>. Accessed August 14, 2017.

³⁹ <https://www.bcm.edu/departments/pediatrics/sections-divisions-centers/childrens-nutrition-research-center/research/wic-nutrition-education>

⁴⁰ <http://www.rcpnc.org/>

⁴¹ <https://becr.sanford.duke.edu/>

The grant will be awarded on a competitive basis, subject to the availability of federal funds. Approximately \$2 million is available for funding this opportunity. We will accept one application package per applicant. The Grantee will be responsible for utilizing their awarded amount (1) to carry out a competition to award sub-grants to WIC local agencies or clinics to design and implement, in collaboration with the Grantee, interactive tools, technical resources, or practical solutions that help support participation and retention among those participating in WIC, (2) to evaluate the interventions, and (3) provide evaluation-related technical assistance to recipients of WIC Special Project, or similar, Grants as needed to support their evaluation of funded interventions. This grant award is contingent upon the availability of Federal funding.

Cooperative Agreement

This grant will be awarded in the form of a cooperative agreement. This agreement is a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Federal government and the Grantee. Cooperative agreements will allow more involvement and collaboration by FNS in the project compared to a grant, and they provide less direction of project activities than a contract. The roles and responsibilities of both the Grantee and FNS will be stated in the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.

FNS's involvement in this cooperative agreement will largely entail reviewing and providing feedback on proposed deliverables and other sources of dissemination of best practices learned from these efforts, such as proposed publications and presentation materials.

Purpose of Cooperative Agreement

The Grantee (Recipient) shall work cooperatively with FNS to:

- 1) **Develop and manage a competitive sub-grant award process to WIC local agencies (LAs) or clinics to design and implement interventions expected to enhance participant experiences and improve retention.** The purpose of the sub-grants is to provide resources to WIC local agencies that propose, and have the capacity to implement, an innovative strategy in keeping with the goals described above. *The Grantee shall propose and justify a specific focus for the sub-grants that fits within the scope described in Priority Areas.* While FNS anticipates 3-5 sub-grants to local agencies, Applicants shall propose their target number and scale of sub-grants. The Grantee will select, award, monitor, and evaluate the sub-grantee's intervention in collaboration with the sub-grantee.
 - a) **The Grantee will develop a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process.** The RFP will describe the opportunity, explain eligibility for the sub-grants, and establish evaluation criteria for the award. The Applicant to this RFA shall describe and justify their focus area for the competitive RFP sub-grant award process they plan to administer, their evaluation criteria for selecting LA sub-grantees, their plans for promoting the opportunity among LAs, and their plans for managing and collaborating with sub-

grantees upon award. At a minimum, each sub-grantee (WIC local agency) must use the funds to (1) design and implement an intervention that addresses WIC participant experiences in either WIC service delivery sites or retail environments (or both) and is expected to improve child retention and (2) collaborate with the Grantee to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. State and regional diversity should be considered when selecting sub-grantee local agencies. The RFP shall require that, at a minimum, proposals include the following:

- A concise description of the intervention solution/strategy to be implemented and how it fits into PRIL's overall focus area as presented to FNS;
- A description of the populations served by the sub-grantee applicant, including how the proposed intervention reflects the social and cultural environment relevant to the populations served and how they relate to retention and participation. Review of research about personal factors, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of WIC participants and WIC-eligible individuals that informs the proposed intervention is encouraged;
- Documentation of support from the relevant WIC State Agency, e.g. Memorandum of Understanding;
- A description articulating whether the sub-grantee is able to implement an intervention in a randomized fashion or with comparison and treatment groups;
- A commitment to providing the data needed to evaluate implemented solutions/strategies to PRIL;
- Documentation of procedures used to maintain the quality and integrity of all data and analyses; and,
- Demonstrated compliance with Federal Program Regulations for all proposed strategies/solutions.⁴²

- b) **Prior to selection of sub-grantees, the Grantee will submit to FNS summaries of all proposals *submitted* by those applying for sub-grants and discuss the proposals with FNS.** At a minimum, the summaries shall include the name of local agency and their point-of-contact for the project, award amount, and a brief description of the sub-grantees' timeline and proposed intervention.
- c) **After sub-grantees are selected, the Grantee will submit updated summaries of *selected* sub-grantee projects for publication on FNS's website and host a web-based Post-Competition Project Meeting.** The Grantee will coordinate a web-based Post-Competition Meeting whereby the Grantee and sub-grantees present the projects they will implement. FNS will provide feedback during this meeting and through subsequent communications.

⁴² <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/wic/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf>

- 2) **Evaluate the sub-grantee interventions.** In collaboration with sub-grant awardees, the grantee will execute a rigorous evaluation of implemented strategies/solutions that documents impact, if any, on child retention as a primary outcome. This requires a clear operational definition of child retention established before implementation. Grantee applications shall articulate this definition as well as their approach to collaboratively developing an evaluation plan with awarded sub-grantees. Other measures shall be included in the evaluation to capture relevant proximal outcomes and process metrics; all included process variables and outcomes must be clearly measured.
- a) **Work collaboratively with sub-grantee recipients to design the intervention to support rigorous evaluation.** An evaluation plan submitted to and approved by FNS is required for evaluating sub-grantee projects within three months of awarding sub-grants. The evaluation plan will outline the study design, outcomes to evaluation with operational definitions clearly stated, and a timeline outlining specific implementation and evaluation milestones.
 - b) **Secure institutional review board (IRB) approval as needed to carry out evaluation-related data collection activities.**
 - c) **Use (or develop) validated instruments and sound methodological and statistical methods to conduct the evaluation.**
 - d) **Provide LA sub-grantees with evaluation results to inform practices and reporting.**
- 3) **Disseminate findings broadly among the WIC research (academic) and WIC practitioner communities.** At a minimum, FNS requires submission of the following reports: annual reports; quarterly reports; a final report white paper to be publicly released in coordination with FNS; and at least one submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The final report white paper shall describe the supported sub-grantee projects, the approach to evaluation including methodology and any guiding theories or frameworks, results of the implemented evaluation, and a discussion of strengths, limitations, and possible next steps in research and dissemination. The white paper will include an executive summary. FNS encourages the Grantee to present research findings at academic and professional conferences. The Grantee is also encouraged to participate in committees, working groups, communities and forums where WIC participant research and maternal, child, infant, and family health services are discussed.
- a) For internal use and informational purposes, the Grantee shall provide FNS with an electronic copy of all manuscripts and other dissemination materials (for example, outreach materials and documents, Powerpoint slides, demonstration and operational versions of applications) resulting from this grant and sub-grant activity at the time of submission for publication and in final form when published.
 - b) FNS encourages PRIL to host periodic meetings with sub-grantees to discuss any issues related to project implementation and evaluation, especially issues related to data collection. FNS also encourages PRIL to host web-based Roundtable Sessions to

- convene periodic discussions with other researchers on the topic of innovations in participant research, especially among other local agencies and with other programs that also serve women, infant, and child populations.
- c) PRIL will host a web-based **Post-Implementation Project Meeting** whereby the Grantee and its sub-grantees will present on their projects and summarize initial findings from their work.
 - d) All reports and manuscripts generated by efforts funded through this Cooperative Agreement must be reviewed by FNS before general distribution or submission to peer review for publication in scientific journals. Reports to be published by FNS on the USDA webpage require FNS review and clearance. Manuscripts that include the FNS point-of-contact as a co-author (where appropriate based on authorship guidelines) must be reviewed and cleared by FNS before submission to peer-review for scientific journals.
- 4) **Provide ongoing evaluation-related technical assistance to WIC agencies carrying out relevant interventions supported by WIC Special Project Grants or other, similar, awards.** The recipient of this grant will use their demonstrated technical and subject matter expertise to provide assistance to other WIC agencies working to increase child retention. The application should provide evidence attesting to the Applicant's ability to provide technical assistance to agencies that were awarded 2017 WIC Special Project grants. The purpose of technical assistance is to support evaluation of interventions and programs funded by WIC Special Project Grants or other awards and can include, but is not limited to: recommendations for rigorous evaluation designs, sample size estimations and sampling frame development, consultation on, identification of and/or construction of validated information collection instruments relevant to these efforts and targeted WIC populations, analysis of evaluation data, and development of reporting materials. The Applicant will describe and document previous experiences providing technical assistance to public, service-providing agencies or similar entities, including but not limited to WIC State and/or local agencies.
- 5) **Sponsor and coordinate two in-person conferences at FNS headquarters in Alexandria, VA:** an Orientation meeting at the beginning of the cooperative agreement period and a Closeout session at the project's completion.
- a) The Orientation Meeting shall be held within 30 days after award. Personnel will present information on the chosen focus area for the competitive RFP process and possible intervention strategies with FNS. The Grantee will also present an updated administration plan for the competitive RFP process. FNS staff will provide input during the presentation and subsequently on any materials generated for the meeting via email. Additionally, potential evaluation strategies will be presented.
 - b) The Closeout Session shall be held toward the end of the grant period and will include presentations of project findings, successes achieved through grant-funded efforts,

problems encountered with implementing WIC participant research, and other lessons learned from completing this project. PRIL's researchers will provide FNS the presentations (e.g., PowerPoint slideshows) after the conference. Any required administrative grant closeout procedures, if needed, may be completed at this time.

Priority Areas

Based on this cooperative agreement, FNS does not anticipate any expansion of WIC program authorities or new funds to adopt, implement, and monitor efforts to increase program retention.

FNS is particularly interested in innovations and replicable interactive tools, technical, or other practical solutions that support positive WIC participant experiences and retention in the program, especially in clinic and vendor environments, without the need for new, ongoing funding.

Examples of approaches that may be explored **include but are not limited to:**

- Interactive tools that help overcome participant confusion with purchasing WIC approved foods or stigma associated with experiences at vendors, or other tools or resources that make the purchasing experience better;
- Interactive tools that can be shown to effectively coordinate scheduled clinic appointments, nutrition education, and food benefits information for participants;
- Technical resources that effectively train vendor staff on providing high-quality service to WIC participants and;
- Technical resources that help local WIC staff design more effective communication strategies to ensure eligible nonparticipants are aware of the program and their eligibility.

Award Period and Project Timeline

FNS plans to announce the selected Grantee by August, 2018 and enter into a cooperative agreement with the said Grantee by August 2018. The Grantee will be allowed to use the funds consistent with its application plans. Applicants may apply for funds for **three years** with an end date no later than September 30, 2021.

Program Specific Requirements

Applicants must demonstrate the following program specific requirements in their proposals:

1. Experience with and/or capacity for designing, implementing, and coordinating a competitive RFP process that solicits proposals from local WIC agencies. All

applications must clearly articulate an administration plan for awarding competitive sub-grants to local WIC agencies;

2. Experience conducting high-quality evaluations in partnership with WIC or similar public health agencies, as evidenced by reports, publications, and/or other materials (while an evaluation plan is not required in the proposal to this RFA, the Grantee will be required to submit a formal evaluation plan to FNS once competitive sub-grants are awarded to LAs);
3. Knowledge about personal factors, attitudes, and beliefs of WIC participants and WIC-eligible individuals, and their social and cultural environments, that relate to retention;
4. Experience with and/or capacity for providing high-quality, evaluation-based technical assistance to WIC and other public health agencies and to community practitioners;
5. A dissemination plan that presents broad dissemination strategies as well as projects that clearly stipulate how products of research could be used with SA and LA partners across geographies;
6. Description of the expected set of final deliverables that will be submitted and/or published by the Grantee during and at the end of the Cooperative Agreement. All reports or products generated by efforts funded through this Cooperative Agreement are subject to review by FNS before publication. This includes review of manuscripts (with inclusion of the FNS point-of-contact as a co-author where appropriate based on authorship guidelines) before submission to peer-review for scientific journals, communications materials meant for general and WIC audiences about the research, and other items;
7. All applications must address how the findings will be disseminated to stakeholders (policy officials, state and local agencies and their staff) and the academic community, and dissemination plans must meet the requirements as specified later in this RFA.
8. Inclusion of subject matter experts on WIC retention strategies is encouraged. In addition, local agency staff members should be included as subject matter experts in the design of evaluation strategies, any data collection instruments, engagement or recruitment materials, and the like.
9. All applications must provide a clear timeline for carrying out all proposed activities and demonstrate evidence of planning to meet other Grant requirements as specified in this RFA.

FNS. To the extent practicable, FNS is available to provide technical consultation to the Grantee as needed. FNS will comment on major project aspects and issues in advance of their implementation in a manner and timeframe agreed upon between the Grantee and FNS.

At FNS's discretion, FNS involvement with the Grantee may include:

1. Providing comments on and having ongoing conversations with the Grantee regarding their plans to meet this RFA's requirements;

2. Reviewing administration, dissemination, and evaluation (once designed) plans associated with research projects performed at local WIC agencies funded by this cooperative agreement;
3. Approving the date and time of the in-person two conferences;
4. Approving the agendas for the in-person two conferences;
5. Reviewing and co-authoring manuscripts;
6. Receiving a courtesy copy of all Grantee-produced documents (e.g. Final report, peer-reviewed publication upon submission) resulting from this cooperative agreement.

Grantee. The Grantee is the public or private, academic or nonprofit research institution that will be selected competitively based on the merits of its application to operate the project. The Grantee has overall responsibility for administering the competitive RFP award system, coordinating project implementations, and evaluating project success, providing evaluation-related technical assistance, and reporting.

The Grantee shall:

1. Select or hire appropriately credentialed personnel to manage and operate project components;
2. Delegate responsibilities to their staff or other partners as appropriate;
3. Conduct appropriate training and provide necessary support for staff and other partners to successfully handle project responsibilities. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. providing data on participating WIC agencies and organizations to FNS;
 - b. coordinating site visits to participating sites for FNS if requested; and,
 - c. fulfilling obligations to FNS;
4. Keep FNS informed on critical junctures and checkpoints after award of cooperative agreement, including management plan, budget, administration plan, dissemination plan that are submitted in preliminary form in the application, as well as evaluation plans once developed after award of sub-grants and the management and staffing plans discussed later in this RFA;
5. Meet specific obligations and approval points as specified by the cooperative agreement;
6. Submit timely progress reports, financial reports and annual reports throughout the award period, and submit a final progress report and final financial report;
7. Attend progress meetings via teleconference as needed;
8. Account for project funds separately from federal food and nutrition assistance administrative funds and establish financial and managerial reporting and controls to assure project funds are not commingled or used inappropriately. A separate and distinct audit trail must be established and maintained for the expenditure of project funds that clearly demonstrates that they are used solely for project purposes;
9. Provide FNS with any data files created and used to generate reports, presentations, and publications resulting from this grant. Such data shall be accompanied with analytic code,

output files, and codebooks and other applicable documentation sufficient for FNS to replicate analyses;

10. Carry out all activities necessary to fulfill the items as described in the “Purpose of Cooperative Agreement” section;
11. Coordinate other grant-related dissemination activities;
12. For internal use and informational purposes, provide FNS with an electronic copy of all manuscripts resulting from this work at the time of submission for publication and in final form when published;

Regular Conference Calls

Quarterly conference calls shall provide an overview of the activities conducted during the previous quarter, major accomplishments with completion dates and budget, deviations from the proposed plan, difficulties encountered, solutions developed to overcome difficulties, assistance needed from FNS on technical issues, and major planned activities for the next quarter. Should a major issue arise between calls, the Grantee should contact the FNS Grants and Program Officers immediately. During key stages in the project, Conference Calls with FNS shall occur monthly; i.e. at the start of the agreement, leading up to the release of the RFP and selecting sub-grantees, etc. The Grantee shall provide FNS with an agenda **3 business days** prior to each call. The Grantee shall also prepare minutes for each call and distribute to FNS no later than **5 business days** after the call.

Interim Deliverables

Once awarded, the Grantee will provide quarterly progress reports and financial reports to identified FNS contact persons. The Grantee will also produce an **annual report** (not to exceed 10 pages) to FNS for publishing on the FNS website. Annual reports will include a description of the focus area, the implemented projects by sub-grantees, and status of implementation and evaluation for that year and, in subsequent years, since the last annual reporting.

Final Deliverable(s)

The project description shall address how the findings will be disseminated to program stakeholders and the academic community. At a minimum, the Grantee shall prepare and deliver to FNS one final report integrating all the information learned from all work funded by this project in an acceptable format for FNS to publish on their website, and submit at least one peer-reviewed journal article for publication based on research using grant funds. All materials that will be published on FNS’s website **must be 508-compliant**. Please see <http://www.section508.gov/> for more information. FNS recognizes that the journal article may not be published by the end of the grant period, but a submitted draft is required.

Allowable Costs

Among other costs, budgets may include expenses related to personnel, contractors, equipment and supplies, meeting expenses, travel, and trainings. The items below reflect

potentially allowable costs for sub-grantees as relevant to the interventions or activities proposed.

Equipment and Supplies: Expenditures for both equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more) and supplies are allowable expenses.

Food Expenses: No more than 10 percent of the sub-grant funds may be used for food purchases in the grant budget. Food purchases should be limited to educational purposes, including: sample tables, taste tests, or promotional use. Food costs related to conducting a test run of a new product are also deemed an appropriate use of funds.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible applicants

Eligible entities include public and private colleges and universities and other non-profit research organizations. This Request for Application (RFA) is open to all Accredited Colleges/Universities, and Private or Public Non-profit Research Institutions or Organizations.

2. Cost sharing or matching considerations

There are no cost sharing or matching requirements. Any matching or cost sharing (as detailed in 200.306) offered is at the discretion of the Applicant. Any cost sharing or matching may be presented in a percentage amount.

3. Other eligibility criteria

FNS will accept only one application from each Applicant. Suspended or debarred organizations are ineligible to submit applications in response to this grant solicitation.

4. Pre-application Screening Requirements

In reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, Federal Awarding Agencies, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.400, are required, prior to making a Federal award, to review information available through various OMB-designated repositories for eligibility qualification or financial integrity, and to have in place a framework for evaluating the risks posed by applicants before they receive Federal awards. The evaluation of the information obtained from the designated repository systems and the risk assessment may result in the Food and Nutrition Service Agency (FNS) imposing special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed. The Federal repository systems FNS will review include:

- 1) SAM, the *System for Award Management*, the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS;

- 2) FAPIIS, the *Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System*, is a database that has been established to track contractor misconduct and performance;
- 3) Dun and Bradstreet, the system where applicants establish a DUNS number which is used by the Federal government to better identify related organizations that are receiving funding under grants and cooperative agreements, and to provide consistent name and address data for electronic grant application systems. The Federal government requires that all applicants for Federal grants and cooperative agreements with the exception of individuals other than sole proprietors have a DUNS number.
- 4) U.S. Department of Agriculture, AD-3030, *Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants*.

Applicants must also respond to the pre-application assessment questions below to allow FNS to evaluate aspects of the applicant's financial stability, quality of management systems, and history of performance, reports and findings from audits. A questionnaire containing these questions has been provided to facilitate the process. Applicants must answer all the pre-application questions. While answering "yes" may be an indicator of risk, the consideration and evaluation of these questions is only an indicator of potential risk and may or may not result in an additional oversight requirements or special conditions be placed on an award should an award be made. Decisions regarding additional oversight requirements will take into consideration the total number of risks identified.

5. Acknowledge USDA support

As outlined in 2 CFR 415.2, grant recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA Food and Nutrition Service support on any publications written or published with grant support and, if feasible, on any publication reporting the results of, or describing, a grant-supported activity. Recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA Food and Nutrition Service support on any audiovisual which is produced with grant support and which has a direct production cost of over \$5,000.

- When acknowledging USDA support, use the following language: "This material is based upon work that is supported by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture." Grantees are asked to follow the [USDA Visual Standards Guide](#) when using the USDA logo.

Grant recipients *may* be asked to host USDA officials for a site visit during the course of their grant award. All costs associated with the site visit will be paid for by USDA and are not expected to be included in grant budgets.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION (REQUIRED)

Applicants may request paper copy of this solicitation and required forms by contacting the FNS Grants Officer at:

Dawn Addison, Grant Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22302
E-mail *Dawn.Addison@fns.usda.gov*

Content and form of application submission (form and format of application submissions)

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following applicant format. The proposed project plan should be typed on 8 ½" X 11" white paper with at least 1 inch margins on the top and bottom. All pages should be single-spaced, in 12 point font. The Project Narrative with relevant information should be captured on no more than 30 pages, not including the cover sheet, table of contents, project summary, resumes, letter of commitment(s), endorsement letter(s), budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms. Appendices should be properly ordered. All pages, excluding the form pages, must be numbered.

Cover Sheet

The cover page should include, at a minimum:

- Applicant's name and mailing address
- Primary contact's name, job title, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address
- Grant program title and subprogram title (if applicable)

Table of Content

Include relevant topic page number

Application Project Summary

The application should clearly describe the proposed project activities and anticipated outcomes that would result if the proposal is funded.

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative should clearly identify what the applicant is proposing for the competitive RFP process, how it will solicit, evaluate, and select proposals submitted by local WIC agencies. The Project Narrative will also discuss the Applicant's experience evaluating public health interventions at WIC clinics and/or other programs. The Applicant will also describe its capacity to provide evaluation-based technical assistance to WIC Special Project Grant recipients. The project narrative should also indicate plans for disseminating work. The management plan should describe administrative procedures, staffing, quality assurance, and other activities as described below.

In preparing your Project Narrative, provide the information requested below, in the order presented below.

- Introduction: Provide background information on the proposed team's experience performing research and evaluation on related public health program participation and

plans for administering a competitive sub-grant award system for local WIC agencies with a focus on retention. Please note any successes, lessons learned, or challenges from previous research and evaluation efforts.

- **Background:** The Background section will provide a summary of the most recent understanding, especially through peer-reviewed published literature, government reports, and previously conducted research of personal factors, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that influence known barriers to participation or retention in WIC. The Background will both describe what is known and highlight what is not known. This section should also describe known innovations that have helped the WIC participant experience in the past or have made shopping experiences better for WIC participants. The selected focus area should be then described and this section should logically support the selected focus area.
- **Objectives, Activities and Timeline:** Clearly state project objectives; use descriptive statements that specifically discuss what you hope to accomplish, include specific activities you will perform to accomplish the project objectives as stated in the **Purpose of Cooperative Agreement** section, and include deadlines. All objectives should lead to a clearly stated goal relevant to this RFA. Your project timeline should start on the award date and end 36 months later. For planning purposes, use the date of award as planned and include dates for important project milestones and deadlines and include dates for items described in the *Purpose of Cooperative Agreement* and *Program Specific Requirements* section.
- **Administration Plan:** Describe the team's plan to administer a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process that includes an overview of the procedures for developing the solicitation, promoting the solicitation among LAs, and evaluation criteria for received proposals. Planned items that will be included in the solicitation beyond those stated in section 1 of the *Purpose of Cooperative Agreement* section of this RFA should be explained. The Applicant should also describe plans to manage and collaborate with sub-grant awardees.
- **Evaluation:** A key component of this work, once awarded, is evaluating implemented, retention-focused projects at local WIC agencies. The application should demonstrate the Applicant's abilities in evaluating interventions and projects implemented in clinic environments and in practice. Please provide details of 2 to 3 major evaluation projects previously performed.
- **Dissemination Plan:** Describe your plans for disseminating findings from this grant. Describe specific plans to make project findings accessible to others at various levels: program participants, communities, practitioners, and policy officials. Indicate possible opportunities to present at conferences, participate in working groups, host roundtable discussions, and present webinars. Provide examples of peer-reviewed journals to which the team expects to submit manuscripts.
- **Evaluation-related Technical Assistance Plan:** The Technical Assistance (TA) Plan should indicate the process, frequency, and mode by which PRIL will interact with SPG awardees (individually or as a group) to provide evaluation assistance, including how recipient agencies will be able to request assistance and how requests for assistance will be managed. The plan should describe a process to document and track each technical assistance experience. These evaluation-related technical assistance efforts should not

exceed the efforts devoted to the Award's primary objective to evaluate projects designed and implemented with sub-grantee WIC local agency partners.

The purpose of technical assistance is to support evaluation of interventions and programs funded by WIC Special Project Grants and can include, but is not limited to: recommendations for rigorous evaluation designs, sample size estimations and sampling frame development, consultation on and construction of validated information collection instruments such as quantitative surveys, qualitative interview and focus group question guides, analysis of evaluation data, and development of reporting materials. The application should provide evidence attesting to the Applicant's ability to provide technical assistance to agencies that received 2016 or 2017 WIC Special Project grants (SPGs).

- **Management Plan:** Provide a clear description of the activities to be undertaken to manage the project to ensure that project activities are completed on time, within budget, and with quality results. Describe PRIL's organizational structure and identify the staff and/or contractors who will manage the project. Describe roles and responsibilities of these employees or contractors, as well as relevant qualifications and experience, and a level of effort specified for specific staff proposed. Note any relevant experience in managing similar activities. Explain contingency plans for staff turnover. Describe how quality assurance, recordkeeping, and accounting activities will be executed. Provide a clear description of how funds will be administered and distributed.

Reports & Products Review

All reports or products generated by efforts funded through this Cooperative Agreement are subject to review by FNS before publication. This includes review of manuscripts (with inclusion of the FNS point-of-contact as a co-author where appropriate based on authorship guidelines) before submission to peer-review for scientific journals, communications materials meant for general and WIC audiences about the research, and other items. Project timelines should factor in review of reports and products by FNS, with 3 weeks for items 30 pages or less, and 6 weeks for items greater than 30 pages in length.

Application Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. The narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct cost. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement. All non-profit organizations must include their 501(c)(3) determination letter issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

Indirect Cost Rate: If available, the current **indirect cost rate**, negotiated with a Federal negotiating agency, should be used. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a negotiated rate is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be

submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. USDA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be stated in the budget narrative.

Required Grant Application Forms

Please refer to the Application Checklist on page 3 for a list of required grant forms.

Electronic Submission Details

Please be aware that the grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted. Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to www.grants.gov should contact the grant support team noted in Section VII: Agency Contacts.

In order to submit an application, you must:

1. Obtain a **DUNS** number
 - In order to obtain a DUNS number, if your organization does not have one, or if you are unsure of your organization's number, contact Dun and Bradstreet via the internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-888-814-1435, Monday thru Friday, 8am-9pm ET. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number.
 - **It may take 2-3 business days to obtain a DUNS number.**
2. Register in the System for Award Management (**SAM**)
 - SAM combines Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance into one new system. For additional information regarding SAM, see the following link:
<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/><https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>
 - Must have organization's DUNS, entity's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on last tax return). **It may take 3-5 business days to register in SAM, however** in some instances the SAM process to complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of the entity record will require **5-7 days or more**.
 - All applicants must have current SAM status at the time of application submission and throughout the duration of a Federal Award in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25.
 - We strongly encourage applicants to begin the process **at least 3 weeks** before the due date of the grant solicitation.
3. Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-3-username-password.html>

4. **Authorize Grants.gov Roles:** After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying them of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online anytime after you have been approved as an AOR.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-4-aor-authorization.html>

5. **Track Role Status:** To track your role request, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-5-track-aor-status.html>

Electronic Signature: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as an AOR; **this step is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov:

Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), you can create individual instances of a workspace.

Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For access to complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

- 1) *Create a Workspace:* Creating a workspace allows you to complete it online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- 2) *Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
 - a. *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>

b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms*: In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.

c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first.

Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

3) *Submit a Workspace*: An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab.

Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

4) *Track a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a workspace package, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the package. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the number listed in the application package of the grant you are applying for.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to call the Grants.gov Support Center and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist the Center with tracking your issue and understanding background information on the issue.

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission:

Online Submission. All applications must be received by **11:59 PM** Eastern time on July 16, 2018. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When the Food and Nutrition Service successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for

the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by the Food and Nutrition Service.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

Additional Information on Grants.gov and the Registration Process:

NOTICE: Special Characters are not Supported

All applicants **MUST** follow grants.gov guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided in the grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Are there restrictions on file names for any attachment I include with my application package?

File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (example: &, -, *, %, /, #, -), this includes periods (.), spacing followed by a dash in the file and for word separation, use underscore (example: Attached_File.pdf) in naming the attachments. **Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected. FNS will not accept any application rejected from www.grants.gov portal due to incorrect naming conventions.**

In order to submit an application via grants.gov, applicants must have obtained a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registered in both the new Systems for Award Management (SAM) and on grants.gov. The applicant is strongly advised to allow ample time to initiate the grants.gov application submission process. All applicants must have SAM status at the time of application submission and throughout the duration of a federal award in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25. Please visit the following websites to obtain additional information on how to obtain a DUNS number (www.dnb.com) and register in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>).

Please be aware that the grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; you need to be sure that you have confirmation that the application was accepted. For tools and tips regarding www.grants.gov, please visit: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html>.

Additional information and applicant resources is available at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to www.grants.gov should contact the grants.gov Support Center at **Local Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726** or via e-mail at support@Grants.gov.

Additional submission information and instructions is available at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html>

Submission Dates and Times

LETTER OF INTENT The eligible applicant that intends to submit an application should submit a Letter of Intent notice by June 11, 2018. This notice does not obligate the applicant to submit an application but provides FNS with useful information in preparing for the review and selection process. The notice should include the potential applicant's name and address, organization's name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the primary point of contact. The applicant can send the letter via the mail or e-mail to the FNS Grants Officer identified below:

Dawn Addison
Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail Dawn.Addison@fns.usda.gov

APPLICATION DUE DATE

The complete application must be uploaded on www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time **July 16, 2018**. Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered.

- FNS will not consider any additions or revisions to an application once it is received through the grants.gov web portal.
- Applications must be submitted via the Grants.gov web portal. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications.
- Grant awards are subject to the availability of funding and/or appropriations of funds.
- FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants this or subsequent fiscal years should additional funds become available.

Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to www.grants.gov should contact the grants.gov Support Center at **Local Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726** or via e-mail at support@Grants.gov

USDA strongly encourages applicants to begin the process at least **four weeks before** the due date and to submit applications to Grants.gov at least **one week** before the deadline to allow time to troubleshoot any issues, should they arise. The grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted. Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting an application to www.grants.gov should contact the grant support team listed in Section VII: Agency Contacts.

Funding Restrictions

Pre-award costs will not be awarded for this grant project.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

EVALUATION OF GRANT APPLICATION CRITERIA

FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure the applicants are eligible entities and are in compliance with all program regulations. FNS will not approve any waivers from Program regulations for any projects submitted in response to this solicitation. FNS will also pre-screen all applications to ensure that they contain the required documents and information, including but not limited to the project and budget narratives and all supporting documentation. Complete applications will need to be submitted by eligible applicants, meet all other eligibility requirements stated in this RFA, submitted on or before the required deadlines, and be in the required format. If an application does not include all appropriate information, FNS will consider the application to be non-responsive and will eliminate it from further evaluation.

Evaluation Factors and Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA. All applicants will be notified whether their proposal has been accepted for an award by FNS. The Project Narrative should demonstrate expert knowledge of WIC, issues related to retention, and the landscape of potential solutions and strategies to overcome barriers to retention. This knowledge will be demonstrated through citing peer-reviewed literature on these subjects as well as local, state, or national reports of analysis or interventions and referencing prior work done in this area by the Applicant. The recipient of the award will also have an understanding of the services provided at local WIC sites, the relationship between the Program and its vendors, and participant experiences in vendor and clinic environments, which also should be clearly demonstrated in the application.

Scoring for Grant Applications

1. Overall Approach (50 points)

Evaluation of a grant application's Overall Approach will be based on:

Sub-Grant Competition, Collaboration and Evaluation (30 points)

- Relevant evaluation experience, skills in designing and carrying out program evaluations, experience collaborating with program practitioners;
- Proposed focus area for sub-grant competition and justification;
- Proposed administration plan for executing the competitive RFP process
- Proposed approach to collaboratively designing evaluations with sub-grantees that

- demonstrates familiarity with common challenges specific to WIC;
- Proposed approach to disseminating insights and findings from funded work as well as sharing resources;
- A reasonable timeline for delivery of project milestones and deliverables;

Evaluation Technical Assistance (20 points)

- Describe and document previous experiences providing technical assistance to public, service-providing agencies or similar agencies, including but not limited to WIC State and/or local agencies.
- Plans for providing evaluation-related technical assistance to other WIC agencies for similar interventions funded by WIC Special Project Grants and other awards, as well as demonstration of the capacity to provide technical assistance;
- Proposed approach to disseminating insights and findings from funded work as well as sharing resources;
- A reasonable timeline for delivery of project milestones and deliverables;

2. Management Plan (15 Points)

Criteria by which a grant application's Management Plan will be evaluated include:

- Degree to which the Management Plan articulates how the applicant will provide the oversight necessary to ensure high-quality products, services, or outcomes and to keep the funded projects on time and within budget;
- Practicality of the presented project timeline and whether presented milestones and deadlines are realistic and achievable;
- Whether the Management Plan demonstrates effective internal controls of funds that are provided to partners and local agencies that ensure funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail;
- Inclusion of a plan for managing personnel associated with the project and for addressing any contingencies such as loss of key personnel; and,
- Whether the Management Plan shows potential for strong interrelationships, teamwork, and cooperation between the Grantee and partners, including partnering researchers and collaborating WIC local agencies.

3. Staffing (20 Points)

Criteria by which a grant application's staffing plan will be evaluated include:

- Identification and description of the roles and responsibilities of key personnel and other partners and staff involved in the proposed project;
- Documentation of key personnel's necessary and relevant education, skills, and experience for their proposed roles on the project, and evidence that staff have expertise in WIC, evaluation, and intervention, and includes notable past

experiences in the form of publications, prior funded grant efforts, reports, et cetera;

- Whether proposed staffing provides sufficient and complete documentation that the time commitment of key personnel appears to be appropriate for their project roles; and,
- Demonstration that partners, if any, have appropriate experience and commitment to effectively fulfill their proposed roles within the time and financial constraints of the project (note: letters of commitment are required from established partners in the application and serve as evidence of these commitments).

4. Budget (15 points)

Criteria by which a grant application's budget will be evaluated include:

- A budget narrative describing how costs within the budget categories were derived and links between expenditures and specific activities/tasks;
- Whether consideration within the budget of all necessary implementation and operational costs (for example, applicants proposing to hold stakeholder discussions must specify how they will use grant funds for hosting, facilitation, and follow-up of stakeholder engagement strategies); and,
- Whether costs are reasonable (the total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project, including if applicable, the use of matching funds or cost sharing available).

Total Possible Points = 100

Review and Selection Process

Following the initial screening process, FNS will assemble a panel group to review and determine the technical merits of each application. The panel will evaluate the proposals based on how well they address the required application components and array the applications from highest to lowest score. The panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on the evaluation scoring. The selecting official reserves the right to accept the panel's recommendation or to select an application for funding out of order to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, or project diversity. FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in the next fiscal year should additional funds be made available.

NOTE: If a discrepancy exists between the total funding request (submitted on SF-424, SF-424A, and budget or budget narrative) within the application package in response to this solicitation, FNS will only consider and evaluate the estimated funding request contained on SF-424.

VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notice

Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions; any contact from a FNS grants or program officer should not be considered as a notice of a grant award. No pre-award or pre-agreement costs incurred prior to the effective start date are allowed unless approved and stated on FNS' signed award document.

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. Only the recognized FNS authorized signature can bind the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to the expenditure of funds related to an award's approved budget.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

CONFIDENTIALITY OF AN APPLICATION

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of FNS transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. Any application that does not result in an award will be not released to the public. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, or biometric records, and any other information that is linked or linkable to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial, and employment information (National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) SP 800-122, Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable information, April 2010).

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, or biometric records, and any other information that is linked or linkable to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial, and employment information (National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) SP 800-122, Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable information, April 2010).

Applicants submitting applications in response to this RFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. All federal and non-federal employees (e.g., contractors, affiliates, or partners) working

for or on behalf of FNS are required to acknowledge understanding of their responsibilities and accountability for using and protecting FNS PII in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974; Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-06-15, *Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information*; M-06-16, *Protection of Sensitive Agency Information*; M-07-16, *Safeguarding Against and Responding to the Breach of Personally Identifiable Information*; and the NIST Special Publication (SP) 800-122, *Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information*.

By submitting an application in response to this RFA, applicants are assuring that all data exchanges conducted throughout the application submission and pre-award process (and during the performance of the grant, if awarded) will be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable Federal laws. By submitting a grant application, applicants agree to take all necessary steps to protect such confidentiality, including the following: (1) ensuring that PII and sensitive data developed, obtained or otherwise associated with UDSA FNS funded grants is securely transmitted. Transmission of applications through Grants.gov is secure; (2) ensuring that PII is not transmitted to unauthorized users, and that PII and other sensitive data is not submitted via email; and (3) Data transmitted via approved file sharing services (WatchDox, ShareFile, etc.), CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, etc., must be encrypted.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The agency requires all panel reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. Names of applicants, including States and tribal governments, submitting an application will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

Federal Tax Liabilities Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

Felony Crime Conviction Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

Debarment and Suspension 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417

A recipient chosen for an award shall comply with the non-procurement debarment and suspension common rule implementing Executive Orders (E.O.) 12549 and 12669, “Debarment and Suspension,” codified at 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417. This common rule restricts sub-awards and contracts with certain parties that are debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs or activities. The approved grant recipient will be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules prior to approving a sub-grant award by checking the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Effective October 1, 2010, all grant applicants must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number as a universal identifier for Federal financial assistance. Active grant recipients and their direct sub-recipients of a sub-grant award also must obtain a DUNS number. To request a DUNS number visit: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

The grant recipient must also register its DUNS number in the new Systems for Award Management (SAM). If you were registered in the CCR, your company’s information is already in SAM and you will just need to set up a SAM account. To register in SAM you will need your entity’s DUNS and your entity’s Tax ID Number (TIN) and taxpayer name (as it appears on your last tax return). Registration should take **3-5 days**. If you do not receive confirmation that your SAM registration is complete, please contact SAM at <https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list..>

FNS may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with the requirements described in 2 CFR 25 to provide a valid DUNS number and maintain an active SAM registration with current information.

Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information 2 CFR Part 170

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006 (Public Law 109–282), as amended by Section 6202 of Public Law 110–252 requires primary grantees of Federal grants and cooperative agreements to report information on sub-grantee obligations and executive compensation. FFATA promotes open government by enhancing the Federal Government’s accountability for its stewardship of public resources. This is accomplished by making Government information, particularly information on Federal spending, accessible to the general public.

Primary grantees, including State agencies, are required to report actions taken on or after October 1, 2010, that obligates \$25,000 or more in Federal grant funds to first-tier sub-grantees. This information must be reported in the Government-wide FFATA Sub-Award Reporting System (FSRS). In order to access FSRS a current SAM registration is required. A primary grantee and first-tier sub-grantees must also report total compensation for each of its five most-highly compensated executives. Every primary and first-tier grantee must obtain a DUNS number prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to grant recipients upon award.

Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417

Section 872 of this Act requires the development and maintenance of a Federal Government information system that contains specific information on the integrity and performance of covered Federal agency contractors and grantees. The Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) was developed to address these requirements. FAPIIS contains integrity and performance information from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, information from the SAM database, and suspension and debarment information from the SAM. FNS will review and consider any information about the applicant reflected in FAPIIS when making a judgment about whether an applicant is qualified to receive an award.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

The Freedom of Information ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, provides individuals with a right to access records in the possession of the Federal Government. The Government may withhold information pursuant to the nine exemptions and the three exclusions contained in the Act.

Application packages submitted in response to this grant solicitation may be subject to FOIA by requests by interested parties. In response to these requests, FNS will comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including departmental regulations.

FNS will forward a Business Submitter Notice to the requested applicant's point-of-contact. Applicants will need to review requested materials and submit any recommendations within 10 days from the date of FNS notification. FNS will redact Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

For additional information on the Freedom of Information (FOIA) process, please contact Jennifer Weatherly, FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at FOIA@fns.usda.gov.

Privacy Policy

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service does not collect any personal identifiable information without explicit consent. To view the Agency's Privacy Policy, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/privacy-policy.

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

This grant will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle A, Chapter II. Any Federal laws, regulations, or USDA directives released after this RFA is posted will be implemented as instructed.

Government-wide Regulations

- 2 CFR Part 25: “Universal Identifier and System for Award Management”
- 2 CFR Part 170: “Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information”
- 2 CFR Part 175: “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”
- 2 CFR Part 180: “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)”
- 2 CFR Part 200: “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 400: USDA’s implementing regulation of 2 CFR Part 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 415: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations”
- 2 CFR Part 416: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”
- 2 CFR Part 417: USDA “Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension”
- 2 CFR Part 418 USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- 41 U.S.C. Section 22 “Interest of Member of Congress”
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Public access to Federal Financial Assistance records shall not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have been excepted from disclosure pursuant to the “Freedom of Information” regulation (5 U.S.C. 552)

General Terms and Conditions of the award may be obtained electronically. Please contact the Grants Officer at:

Dawn Addison

Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail Dawn.Addison@fns.usda.gov

3. Reporting

FINANCIAL REPORTING

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425, Financial Status Report data into the FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis. In order to access FPRS, the

grant recipient must obtain USDA e-authentication certification and access to FPRS. For additional information on FPRS, visit: www.fprs.fns.usda.gov.

PROGRESS REPORTING

The recipient will be responsible for managing and monitoring the progress of the grant project activities and performance. The grant terms and conditions will indicate the reporting schedule for submitting project performance/progress reports to FNS. Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the award terms and conditions, including results of the grant project.

VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this solicitation, please contact the Grants Officer at:

Dawn Addison

Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail Dawn.Addison@fns.usda.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Debriefing Requests

Non-selected applicants may request a debriefing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of submitted proposals. This information may be useful when preparing future grant proposals. Additional information on debriefing requests will be forwarded to non-selected applicants. The Food and Nutrition Service reserves the right to provide this debriefing orally or in written format.

RFA BUDGET NARRATIVE CHECKLIST

This checklist will assist you in completing the budget narrative portion of the application. Please review the checklist to ensure the items below are addressed in the budget narrative.

NOTE: The budget and budget narrative, as well as forms SF-424 and SF-424A must be in line with the proposal project description (statement of work) bona fide need. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

	YES	NO
Personnel		
Did you include all key employees paid for by this grant under this heading?		

Are employees of the applicant's organization identified by name and position title?		
Did you reflect percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTE)?		
Fringe Benefits		
Did you include your organization's fringe benefit amount along with the basis for the computation?		
Did you list the type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds?		
Travel		
Are travel expenses itemized? For example origination/destination points, number and purpose of trips, number of staff traveling, mode of transportation and cost of each trip.		
Are the Attendee Objectives and travel justifications included in the narrative?		
Is the basis for the lodging estimates identified in the budget? For example include excerpt from travel regulations.		
Equipment		
Is the need for the equipment justified in the narrative?		
Are the types of equipment, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased listed in the budget?		
Is the basis for the cost per item or other basis of computation stated in the budget?		
Supplies		
Are the types of supplies, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased reflected in the budget?		

Is the basis for the costs per item or other basis of computation stated?		
Contractual: (FNS reserves the right to request information on all contractual awards and associated costs after the contract is awarded.)		
Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost for a contract or sub-grant expense(s) shown on the budget?		
A justification for all Sole-source contracts must be provided in the budget narrative prior to approving this identified cost.		
Other		
Consultant Services. – Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost shown on the budget. The following information must be provided in the justification: description of service, the consultant’s name and an itemized list of all direct cost and fees, number of personnel including the position title (specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the costs), Number of estimated hours X hourly wages, and all expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project.		
For all other line items listed under the “Other” heading. - List all items to be covered under this heading along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.		
Indirect Costs		
Has the applicant obtained a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from an Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most recent and signed negotiated rate agreement must be provided along with the application.		
If no negotiated agreement exists, the basis and the details of the indirect costs to be requested should also be reflected in the budget.		

FOR GRANT APPLICANT USE ONLY. DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM WITH THE APPLICATION

Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire

PURPOSE

Recipients of Federal funds must maintain adequate accounting systems that meet the criteria outlined in 2 CFR §200.302 [Standards for Financial and Program Management](#). The responses to this questionnaire are used to assist in the Food and Nutrition Service Agency's (FNS) evaluation of your accounting system to ensure the adequate, appropriate, and transparent use of Federal funds. Failure to comply with the criteria outlined in the regulations above may preclude your organization from receiving an award. This form applies to FNS' competitive and noncompetitive grant programs. Please return this questionnaire with your application package to us.

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Legal Organization Name:

D-U-Ns Number:

FINANCIAL STABILITY AND QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Requirement	Yes	No
1. Has your organization received a Federal award within the past 3 years?	☐	☐
2. Does your organization utilize accounting software to manage your financial records?	☐	☐
3. Does your accounting system identify the receipt and expenditure of program funds separately for each grant?	☐	☐
4. Does your organization have a dedicated individual responsible for monitoring organizational funds, such as an accountant or a finance manager?	☐	☐

5. Does your organization separate the duties for staff handling the approval of transactions and the recording and payment of funds?	☐	☐
6. Does your organization have the ability to specifically identify and allocate employee effort to an applicable program?	☐	☐
7. Does your organization have a property /inventory management system in place to track location and value of equipment purchased under the award?	☐	☐

AUDIT REPORTS AND FINDINGS

Requirement	Yes	No
1. Has your organization been audited within the last 5 fiscal years? <i>(If the answer is "Yes" and this report was issued under the Single Audit Act please note this in the box below marked "Additional Information" and if not issued under the "Single Audit Act", please attach a copy or provide a link to the audit report in the Hyperlink space below).</i>	☐	☐
2. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Qualified Opinion" or an "Adverse Opinion"?	☐	☐
3. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Material Weakness" disclosed?	☐	☐
4. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Significant Deficiency" disclosed?	☐	☐
Hyperlink (if available):		
Additional information including expanding on responses in previous sections:		

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

I certify that the above information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Authorized Representative's Signature and Date
Name:
Phone:
Email: