Information Collection: 0584-0512
Expiration date: September 30, 2024

United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

Direct Certification Improvement Grants-Child Nutrition Programs

Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Applications (RFA)
Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 10.579

Release Date:	**June 10, 2024**
Application Due Date:	**July 29, 2024; 11:59 pm EST**
Anticipated Award Date:	**September 2024**

OMB BURDEN STATEMENT:

This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in the acceptance of applications for grant assistance for the purpose of improving and advancing NSLP State agency direct certification activities and performance. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to monitor program funding and assess NSLP State agency technical assistance needs. This collection does not request any personally identifiable information under the Privacy Act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average [16] hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0512). Do not return the completed form to this address.

Application Checklist

This Application Checklist provides applicants with a list of the required actions and documents that must be completed. However, FNS expects that applicants will read the entire RFA prior to the submission of their application and comply with all requirements outlined in the solicitation. The Application Checklist is for applicant use only and should not be submitted as part of the Application Package.

Complete the following **at least four weeks** prior to submission:

- ☐ Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number;
- ☐ Register the UEI number in the System for Award Management (SAM); and,
- ☐ Register in grants.gov.

When **preparing your application**, ensure:

- ☐ Application format and narrative meet the requirements included in Section 4 – Application and Submission Information. This includes page limits, priorities outlined in Section 5 – Application Review Information, and all necessary attachments.

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

- ☐ All key staff proposed to be paid by this grant.
- ☐ The percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- ☐ Your organization's fringe benefit rate and amount, as well as the basis for the computation.
- ☐ The type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds.
- ☐ Itemized travel expenses (including type of travel), travel justification, and basis for lodging estimate.
- ☐ 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 an 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 and the applicant has never been approved for a NICRA, they may charge up to 10% de minimis). If an applicant is requesting the de minimis rate or indirect costs are not required, please state 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
- ☐ FNS-906 – Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire (on the related documents tab)
- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF – Upload using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15)
- ☐ Resumes of key staff
- ☐ Letters of support/commitment from key staff and partners
- ☐ Additional attachments as required

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1. Program Description and Objectives

Executive Summary

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service invites State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to apply for Direct Certification Improvement Grants to fund the costs of improving their direct certification rates with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other assistance programs, as allowed under Federal statute and regulations. Under this request for applications (RFA), approximately **$2.3 million** is available for competitive grants to NSLP State agencies with the lowest direct certification rates for children who are members of households receiving SNAP benefits to fund direct certification improvement projects. . However, as discussed in more detail in Section 3, Eligibility Information, applicants who have direct certification rates at 95 percent or higher, as reported in the latest Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program Report to Congress, must present a compelling case in their application proposals as to why additional funds are necessary for improvements in their direct certification system or processes for them to maintain rates at or above the mandated 95 percent benchmark. The legislative authority for this grant agreement announcement is Section 749(h)(1)(A) and (C)(i) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (Public Law 111–80 Click Here for Congress.gov Link).

Background and Authority

Direct Certification is the process through which States and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may establish National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) benefits based upon information provided by agencies administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Children determined eligible via direct certification for these Programs are certified to receive free meal benefits without the household having to submit an application. Certain children who are foster, migrant, runaway, or homeless may also qualify in this way and become certified for free meals without submitting an application, based upon documentation submitted to the State or LEA by an appropriate State or local agency. Certain children who receive Medicaid benefits may also qualify through direct certification and become certified for free meals or reduced-price meals without submitting an application, based upon documentation provided to the State Child Nutrition agency by the State Medicaid agency.[1]

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-265), amended Section 9(b) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 USC 1758(b) to require all LEAs to establish a system to directly certify children as eligible for free school meals when they are members of households that receive SNAP benefits. Additionally, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296) (HHFKA) amended the NSLA and established State performance benchmarks for directly certifying children for free school meals under the NSLP when those children are living in households receiving benefits under SNAP. States are mandated to achieve a

[1] Under the pilot project authority in Section 18(c) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 USC 1769(c), approved States the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Direct Certification with Medicaid (DC-M) Demonstration Project may certify eligible students for both free and reduced price meal eligibility in the NSLP and SBP without need of application via the use of Medicaid data files. Click Here for Participating Demonstration Project States

direct certification rate of 95 percent or above. States which do not meet the benchmark for a particular school year are required to develop and implement a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) to improve direct certification procedures and fully meet the benchmarks in subsequent school years.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L.110-246) amended the NSLA to require FNS to assess the effectiveness of State and local efforts to directly certify children for free school meals when they are members of households receiving SNAP, and report to Congress State progress in this area. Each year since 2008[2], FNS has computed direct certification rates for each State using estimates of the number of school-age SNAP participants (between ages 5 and 17) and the number of children from SNAP households directly certified as eligible for free school meals. These rates have been published in Report to Congress: *Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress*. The most recently published Report (SY 2018-2019) is available at: Click Here For Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress - Report to Congress | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov)

To assist States in implementing, maintaining, and improving high performing direct certification systems, Section 749(h) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-80) [123 STAT. 2133] provided $22 million that the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) must issue as grants to State agencies that administer the NSLP, and have the lowest rates of children directly certified for free meals. FNS is now issuing a new competitive Direct Certification Improvement Grant opportunity to make available to States approximately $2.3 million in remaining funds to be used for direct certification improvements. The number of grants awarded is dependent upon the number and types of applicants. State agencies may use grant funds, in accordance with FNS requirements, to pay costs associated with improving their direct certification rates, and fund projects which meet the scope and requirements detailed within this RFA.

Key Objectives

Below is a list of the Program Objectives. As noted in Section 4, within the "Activities/Indicators Tracker," proposed activities should be clearly aligned to these objectives and their associated activities and indicators.

Application proposals must include at least **1** of the **9** objectives identified below. Proposals can (and should in many instances) contain more than one objective. Note that if awarded, grantees will be required to report on progress towards activities aligned with the required objective(s) and must use the FNS-908 Performance Progress Report. Carefully considering proposed activities and indicators will prepare grantees for their progress reporting requirements if awarded.

[2]FNS did not calculate State SNAP-DC performance rates for SY 20-21 due to Covid-related reporting waivers.

#	Objective
1	Improve Access and Accuracy of Direct Certification-Associated Student Data • e.g. Automate student data transfer and increase to nightly exchange.
2	Increase Access and Accuracy of Direct Certification Program Data (e.g. SNAP, TANF; Foster Care, FDPIR, Medicaid) • e.g. Revise SNAP data exchange protocols to provide for nightly transfer of new and revised SNAP participant records.
3	Conduct Analysis of State Agency Direct Certification Linkage Method • e.g. Adjust exact match thresholds to determine the level of decrease in precision that will result in unacceptable return of false positives.
4	Improve State Agency Direct Certification Linkage Method • e.g. Incorporate edit distance algorithm tools.
5	Improve LEA-level Adjudication of Partial Match and Non-Match Opportunities • e.g. Develop LEA on-screen partial match functionality.
6	Improve Direct Certification System Student Search Functionality • e.g. Incorporate multi-field search tools.
7	Improve Match Result LEA Transfer and Notification Process • e.g. Implement LEA email notification system.
8	Improve State Agency Direct Certification Monitoring • e.g. Develop reports to monitor LEA access of State direct certification system.
9	Improve or Expand Direct Certification Training • e.g. Develop direct certification LEA user manual.

2. Federal Award Information

The following information is intended to provide applicants with information to help make informed decisions about proposal submissions.

- Total amount of funding expected to award: $2,300,000.
- Anticipated number of awards: Approximately 5.
- Maximum award amount (award ceiling): $1,000,000.
- Application due date: July 29, 2024.
- Anticipated award announcement date: September 2024.
- Anticipated period of performance (start and end date of the award): September 2024 to September 2027.
- Please note: Grant awards are subject to the availability of funding and/or appropriations of funds.

Allowable Costs

All costs proposed in the budget and detailed in the budget narrative must be allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable. Refer to the following link 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles for a detailed description of all allowable and unallowable costs.

Child Nutrition Access and Accountability through Technology (CNAAT): Award recipients will be expected to budget for travel attendance of one (1) State agency representative familiar with the grant project for each CNAAT training event occurring during the grant award period of performance. For reference, applicants should assume one training event per Federal fiscal year.

Contracted Services: To achieve grant project objectives award recipients may budget for and procure contracted services and solutions. These project activities include (but are not limited to) consulting, computer programming and development, data analysis, project management, and vendor-provided software. All contracted services must adhere to USDA Child Nutrition Programs Procurement Regulations located at 2 CFR 200.317, Procurements by States. Subrecipients of the State must comply with 2 CFR 200.318-.327. Please refer to the following link USDA Child Nutrition Programs Procurement Regulations. Contracted services which do not comply with USDA Child Nutrition Programs Procurement Regulations will result in unallowable costs to the grant.

Equipment: Expenditures for equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of $5,000 or more) for use by State agencies are allowable expenses with prior approval by FNS. While these expenditures may be allowable, FNS reserves the right to approve/disapprove these expenditures based upon the needs of the Agency and the proposed project.

Funds may not be used for the purchase of equipment or supplies for use at LEA or school-site level. This restriction does not include Statewide software solutions accessed and utilized by LEA or school-site direct certification staff.

All costs proposed in the budget and detailed in the budget narrative must be allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable. Refer to the following link 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles for a detailed description of all allowable and unallowable costs.

Unallowable Costs

Entertainment

Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs (e.g., mascot costumes, promotional items) unless there is a programmatic purpose and prior approval is granted by FNS.

3. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Per Section 749(h) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-80), grants are available to State agencies that administer the NSLP, with priority award to those with the lowest direct certification rates for children who are members of households receiving SNAP benefits. The statutory benchmark requires States to **reach** and **maintain** direct certification rates with SNAP of at least 95 percent. T**his grant opportunity is extended to all States agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).** However, applicant State agencies which have direct certification rates at 95 percent or higher, as reported in the latest Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program Report to Congress, must present a compelling case in their application proposals as to why additional funds are necessary for improvements in their direct certification system or processes for them to maintain rates at or above the mandated 95 percent benchmark.

FNS will accept only one grant application from any State agency under this RFA.

Entities not meeting the eligibility definitions will be deemed ineligible and removed from competition without further consideration.

Note: In cases where an eligible applicant is deemed nonresponsive for failing to submit required elements or documents associated with this RFA, they will be considered ineligible and removed from consideration.

Pre-Award Screening Requirements

In reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, prior to making a Federal award, Federal awarding agencies, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205, are required to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualifications or financial integrity information. Additionally, Federal awarding agencies are required to have a framework in place for evaluating the risks posed by applicants before they receive Federal awards. The FNS review of risk posed by applicants will be based on the following:

- SAM.gov, the *System for Award Management*, the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS.
- FAPIIS, the *Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System* that has been established to track contractor misconduct and performance.
- FNS Risk Assessment Questionnaire
    - Applicants must complete the Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire that allows FNS to evaluate aspects of the applicant's financial stability, quality of management systems, and history of performance, reports, and findings from audits. The questionnaire contains a number of questions that may be an indicator of potential risk.

The evaluation of the information obtained from the designated systems and the risk assessment questionnaire may result in FNS imposing special conditions or additional oversight requirements that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

Acknowledgement of 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 should 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.

4. Application and Submission Information

Content and Form of Application Submission

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following applicant format. The proposed project plan should be presented 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 a readable 12-point font such as Times New Roman. **The project description with relevant information should be captured on no more than 10 pages, not including the cover sheet, table of content, resumes, letter(s) of commitment, endorsement letter(s),** activities and indicators tracker **budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms. All pages, excluding form pages must be numbered** sequentially**.**

Special Instructions:

- Late application submission will not be considered in this competition. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via Grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline, as established in each round above see first page; 11:59 pm EST; or the allocation of all available grant funds.
- Letters of support must be submitted with the application through grants.gov. Letters submitted via email will not be considered.
- Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, certification will not be considered.
- Applications missing a written proposal or budget narrative will not be considered and deemed nonresponsive and removed from further consideration.
- FNS reserves the right to request clarification on any application submitted in response to this solicitation.
- Applications not submitted via Grants.gov will not be considered.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.

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 Contents (no page limit)

The Table of Contents must include relevant sections, subsections, and associated page numbers. Include all pages, appendices, and attachments. All pages of the application should be sequentially numbered, including the attachments.

Application Project Summary

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

Project Narrative

The project narrative should clearly identify what the applicant is proposing and how it will address a solution, the expected results and/or benefits once the solution is achieved, and how it will meet the RFA program scope and objectives. The proposed project methodology should describe the project design, address program specific methodology needs, procedures, timetables, monitoring/oversight and the organization's project staffing.

Activities/Indicators Tracker

Proposed Activities and indicators measuring success must be mapped to Program Objectives (as described in Section 1 – Program Description) in the below format (note that additional Activities/Indicators can be added as needed).

Note: Indicators are defined as any metric you anticipate will be able to be tracked during the period of performance of the grant. Common examples include Number of People Attended, Number of People Impacted, Number of Conferences Delivered, Number of Materials Created, Number of Trainings, Number of People Trained.

The maximum amount of any single full-scope implementation grant is **$1,000,000**. However, the size of grants will likely vary, based on differences in project scope, the responsiveness of application packages. Regardless of the activities proposed, applicants must provide sufficient documentation to explain and justify all grant project cost estimates to establish that they are reasonable, necessary, allowable and allocable to the purpose of these grants. Additionally, FNS retains authority to award less than the amount requested by an applicant.

Activities/Indicators Tracker

Proposed Activities and indicators measuring success must be mapped to Program Objectives (as described in Section 1 – Program Description) in the below format (note that additional Activities/Indicators can be added as needed).

Note: Indicators are defined as any metric you anticipate will be able to be tracked during the period of performance of the grant. Common examples include Number of People Attended, Number of People Impacted, Number of Conferences Delivered, Number of Materials Created, Number of Trainings, Number of People Trained.

Example

Objective #6	Improve Direct Certification System Student Search Functionality
Activity 1	Analyze current search data attribute fields use
Indicator	Use of data attribute fields
Activity 2	LEA Focus Group for Expanded Fields
Indicator	New data attribute fields added yes or no
Activity 3	Analysis and adjustment of search functionality algorithm
Indicator	Algorithm adjusted yes or no.

Activity 4	LEA User Training of new System Student Search Functionality
Indicator	Training completed yes or no

Project Timeline (include as part of Project Narrative)

The project timeline should include dates for important project milestones. The timeline should include, but is not limited to:

- Hiring of Project Director and other staff as needed.
- Project planning and information gathering.
- Implementation of key cooperative agreement activities
- Data collection and evaluation activities.
- Other key milestones.

Risk Management

Identify existing and/or probable project risks. Note: Indicating there are no risks, is not a reasonable approach to the project. All projects involve some risks, (i.e. unexpected change in staff, unforeseen costs, etc.). To provide information on your project's risks, your agency and partners should consider the realities of the work involved that are exposed to potential breakdown. Causes of risks may include any of the following, as well as others: a complex timeline, inability to procure an acceptable vendor in time to meet the project timeline, unexpected project costs, use of flawed data, or involvement of a high number of partners that have not traditionally worked together, inadequate requirements for system development, system testing failures, etc. Some risks may be known or assumed in advance, while other risks are seen as potential or probable.

Additionally, briefly describe how the project will be managed to minimize overall risks. In reference to the risks identified in #5a above, explain what actions the project team and partners will take to reduce the potential negative impacts from those risks.

Staffing Plan & Key Personnel

Briefly describe the plan for staffing the grant project with the needed personnel, including the process for identifying and hiring or contracting for needed staff. Response should include key personnel, identifying roles, responsibilities, Response should also indicate whether each identified staff person is a State employee or a contractor (sample template below). Resumes must be included detailing level of relevant experience for all project personnel supporting the project at least 20% of the time or managing key project areas if less than 20% on the project.

Staff Name	Is person Employee or Contractor?	Position and Responsibilities	Time dedicated to Project (% FTE)	Source of Funding

Transferability

Describe how the proposed implementation project is likely to produce outcomes and information that not only will aid the applicant State agency in accomplishing program improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects.

Application Budget Narrative

The budget narrative, formatted as a table, 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. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposed project description. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement. Budget categories in this table must match those listed on the SF-424A form. If the budget table is created in a spreadsheet, it must be formatted to fit on an 8.5 x 11-inch page, with a font no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

Provide an itemized budget, formatted in a table, describing the appropriate use of grant funds, including calculations for how all line-item expenses were derived. All budget line-item expenses must be allowable costs as defined in this RFA and 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principals and must align with the activities described in the Project Narrative for this grant. Proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives. All funding requests must be in whole dollars only. Budget categories in this table must match those listed on the SF-424A.

The budget should describe the use of the grant agreement funds and justify costs. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principals and Section 2.1 – Allowable Costs when developing the budget. The budget must also be submitted using the "Budget Information Form" (SF-424A). Proposed costs must be allowable, necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives.

If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) as an appendix. More information about indirect cost rates is noted in Section 4.1 – Content and Form of Application Submission.

Sustainability

Describe the plans to maintain the overall project, system and/or software. Indicate the cost of ongoing maintenance and how the State will fund these costs to keep the system in operation beyond the grant period.

Indirect Cost Rate

A current **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)**, negotiated with a cognizant Federal agency, should be used to charge indirect costs. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a NICRA is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If the applicant does not have, and has never been approved for, a NICRA, they may charge up to 10% de minimis. In this instance, the applicant must indicate they are requesting the de minimis rate. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "none requested" should be stated in the

budget narrative. For questions related to the indirect cost rate, please work with the Grant Officer as noted in Section 7 of this RFA.

Note: Each organization is assigned to a single federal agency (by the Office of Management and Budget) that acts on behalf of all federal agencies in indirect cost rate negotiations and is referred to as the "cognizant agency."

Required Grant Application Forms

The required grants.gov forms may be previewed at grants.gov/web/grants/forms/forms-repository.html. These forms are part of the grants.gov Workspace application.

- Non-Construction Grant Projects Forms: SF-424 Family
    - Application and Instruction for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
    - Budget Information and Instructions (SF-424A)
    - Assurance-Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
- SF LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities)
    - Indicate on your form whether your organization intends to conduct lobbying activities. If you organization does not intend to lobby, write "Not Applicable" in boxes required to be completed.
- Additional Required Forms and Information:
    - Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. Please see below for further information
    - SAM registration. Please see below for further information.

Submission Date

Complete grant applications must be uploaded to grants.gov by 11:59 PM EST on the due date listed on the cover page .

- Applications must be submitted via grants.gov. Mailed, emailed, or hand-delivered application packages will not be accepted. For further instructions, see the "Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov" below. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.
- Those applicants who fail to submit any required documents or forms will be deemed NONRESPONSIVE, and therefore will be INELIGIBLE to participate in the competition and removed from further consideration.

FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration 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. Please note that upon submission, grants.gov may send multiple confirmation notices. Applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was **accepted**.

FNS will not accept applications outside of grants.gov. Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications through grants.gov should contact applicant support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. This service is available 24/7.

Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov

Applicants must register with grants.gov and SAM.gov in order to submit an application to FNS via grants.gov as required.

In order to submit an application, you must:

1. Obtain a UEI number

What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)?
A UEI is a unique number assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who register to do business with the federal government. For more information, visit the U.S. General Services Administration website.

Where do I go to learn more about the UEI?
The U.S. General Services Administration Unique Entity Identifier Update page contains the most up-to-date information about the UEI.

Note: After April 4, 2022, entities can register in SAM.gov and will be assigned their "SAM UEI." They will no longer obtain or use a "DUNS UEI" for entity registration or reporting. For additional information on the UEI process, please visit SAM.gov.

2. Register in the System for Award Management (SAM)

- On April 4, 2022, the UEI used across the federal government changed from the DUNS number to the UEI (generated by SAM.gov).
- SAM combines federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance into one system. Visit SAM.gov for additional information.
- To register, you must have your organization's UEI, the organization's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on the last tax return). It may take up to 5 to 7 business days or more to register and/or complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of an entity record.
- 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.
- FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin this 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 Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to complete this process. For more detailed instruction about creating a profile on grants.gov, visit grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html.

How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov

Applicants must apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement or RFA, you can create individual instances of a workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, visit grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support (except Federal holidays) via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to contact grants.gov support and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist the Center with tracking your issue.

For programmatic and financial-related questions regarding this specific grant opportunity, please contact the Grant Officer noted in Section 7 – Federal Awarding Agency Contacts of this RFA.

NOTICE: Special Characters and Naming Conventions

All applicants **must** follow grants.gov guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided by grants.gov (per the grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ).

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

e.g., ! @ # $ % ^ & * - ‘). (_). For example, Attached_File.pdf.

If these guidelines for file names are not followed, your application will be rejected. FNS will not accept any application rejected from the grants.gov portal due to incorrect naming conventions.

Additional information can be found at grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html#attachments.

Grants.gov Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 PM EST on the due date listed on the cover page, as detailed in Section 4 – Submission Date. 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 Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (e.g., GRANTXXXXXXXX) from grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and a grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When FNS successfully retrieves the application from grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement 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 FNS funding.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission could 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.

1. **Authorize Grants.gov Roles:**
   After creating an account on Grants.gov, the E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) will receive an email notifying them of the registration and requesting that roles be assigned. The EBiz POC will need to go to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. An approved Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must complete and submit the application online at Grants.gov. To learn more about the EBiz POC role and other profile roles, please visit Manage Roles for Applicant.

2. **Track Role Status:**
   To track your role request, please visit Manage Roles for Applicant.

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.**

Additional information can be found at grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html#attachments.

Grants.gov Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 PM EST on the due date listed on the cover page, as detailed in Section 4 – Submission Date. 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 Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (e.g., GRANTXXXXXXXX) from grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and a grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When FNS successfully retrieves the application from grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement 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 FNS funding.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission could 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.

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 (This includes periods (.) and spacing followed by a dash in the file. To separate words in naming a file, use underscore.

Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is subject to the requirements of EO 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." This Executive Order was issues with the desire to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on State and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed federal financial assistance and direct federal development. The Order allows each State to designate an entity to perform this function.

If you are located within a State that does not have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC), you may send application materials directly to a federal awarding agency.

For a list of State agency contacts, please visit whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf.

Funding Restrictions

In addition to the administrative requirements contained in this RFA, the provisions below will also be a part of the agreement between FNS and the State agency:

1. Funds authorized cannot be used to replace existing funding (e.g. State Administrative Expense (SAE) funds) earmarked by the State agency for administrative review, oversight and training.
2. Current expenditures of State and local funds for the operation of school nutrition programs shall not be diminished as a result of receipt of funds to implement direct certification improvements.
3. Funds cannot be used to shift existing staff from their normal duties paid with SAE funds to support the grant activities unless the staff that are reassigned are replaced with additional staff in the positions that are vacant.
4. Funds must be used for FNS approved Direct Certification Improvement grant project activities for the purpose of improving direct certification processes and rates.

5. 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.
6. Grant funds may not be used for the purpose of construction.

5. Application Review Information

Review 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. Ineligible or nonresponsive applications will be removed from further consideration for grant funds. Thereafter, FNS will review and consider eligible applications in accordance with the evaluation process described in the following paragraphs.

The following selection criteria will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA.

Project Purpose, Goals and Impact on Direct Certification (40 points)

- The significance of the problem(s) to be addressed is clearly demonstrated and proposed implementation activities are appropriate to address the problem(s) identified.
- The project goals and objectives are in line with the purpose of the funding described under Section "Program Description and Objectives."
- The project activities to be completed during the grant period clearly support sustainable improvements that will likely increase direct certification rates with SNAP (and other public programs, if applicable). Proposed activities are in line with the examples given for projects under Section "Key Objectives."
- The performance measures used to assess success are realistic, measurable and clearly defined.

Project Planning, Design and Management (25 points)

- The project organization and project management approach (including staffing, procurement of contractors, communications planning, quality assurance planning, risk management planning, system development lifecycle process planning where applicable, partnering with appropriate stakeholders, tracking timelines, measuring performance, monitoring progress, etc.) indicates that the applicant has the capacity to manage and execute the implementation project successfully to meet the goals of the project.
- The scope and timeline proposed for the project are reasonable and attainable during the grant time frame.

Budget Plan (20 points)

- The total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project.
- Proposed costs are reasonable, necessary, allowable and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives.
- The budget includes a line-item description for estimated costs and shows how the cost supports the project goals.
- Budget calculations and documentation show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated.

- If indirect costs are included, the applicant agency's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a Federal agency is provided, and the indirect cost rate is applied correctly to allowable direct costs.
- If contractual costs are included in the budget estimate and the contractor is (or will be) acquired without competition, the applicant has provided strong justification for a sole source contract with copies/references to State statutes, regulations and policies that support the sole source decision.

Sustainability and Transferability (10 points)

- The proposed implementation project is likely to produce outcomes and information that not only will aid the applicant State agency in accomplishing direct certification improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects.
- The applicant demonstrates that the State agency has the capacity to implement and sustain the program improvements resulting from the grant activities after the Direct Certification Improvement Grant funding ends.

Risk Management (5 points)

Identify existing and/or probable project risks. Note: Indicating there are no risks, is not a reasonable approach to the project. All projects involve some risks, (i.e. unexpected change in staff, unforeseen costs, etc.). To provide information on your project's risks, your agency and partners should consider the realities of the work involved that are exposed to potential breakdown. Causes of risks may include any of the following, as well as others: a complex timeline, inability to procure an acceptable vendor in time to meet the project timeline, unexpected project costs, use of flawed data, or involvement of a high number of partners that have not traditionally worked together, inadequate requirements for system development, system testing failures, etc. Some risks may be known or assumed in advance, while other risks are seen as potential or probable.

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. Each application that passes initial screening for responsiveness, i.e., contains requirement elements described herein, will be given to the panel to be evaluated as to how well it addresses each application component. The panel will determine if all questions are addressed adequately and identify any areas that need further clarification. If further clarification is needed to determine the merit of the application, FNS will notify the applicant in writing and describe any information that is needed to make the award decision. However, responses to clarification questions will not alter the assigned scoring unless the panel is reconvened. Applicants will be given an opportunity to provide additional information and documentation needed to clarify the proposal content. 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. FNS may request information from the applicant not clearly addressed in their proposal. If sufficient funding is not available to award grants to all applicants, FNS reserves the right to give preference to applications from States with the lowest direct certification rates with SNAP; the innovation demonstrated in an application; agency priorities; and/or the evaluation by the technical review panel.

6. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notice

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. 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 (FNS-529). 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.

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" means information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual (OMB Circular A-130, *Managing Information as a Strategic Resource*).

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 PII in accordance with applicable law, regulation, and policy [e.g., the Privacy Act of 1974; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum, M-17-12, *Preparing for and Responding to a Breach of Personally Identifiable Information*; OMB Circular A-130, *Managing Information as a Strategic Resource* (this is a non-exhaustive list of requirements in this area)].

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, regulations, and policies. By submitting a grant application, applicants agree to take all necessary steps to protect PII, including the following: (1) ensuring that PII and sensitive data developed, obtained or otherwise associated with UDSA FNS funded grants is securely transmitted; (2) ensuring that PII is not transmitted to unauthorized users, and that PII and other sensitive data is not submitted via email; (3) data is transmitted via FNS approved file sharing services or encrypted mobile media storage devices; and (4) ensuring that PII is encrypted and password protected both in transit and at rest.

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 EOs 12549 and 12698, "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 cooperative agreement 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 SAM at SAM.gov.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Requirement for SAM. Unless you are exempted from this requirement under 2 CFR 25.110, you as the recipient must maintain current information in the SAM. This includes information on your immediate and highest-level owner and subsidiaries, as well as on all your predecessors that have been awarded a Federal contract or Federal financial assistance within the last three years, if applicable, until you submit the final financial report required under this Federal award or receive the final payment, whichever is later. This requires that you review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your information or another Federal award term.

Requirement for Unique Entity Identifier: If you are authorized to make subawards under this Federal award, you:

- Must notify potential subrecipients that no entity (*see* definition in paragraph C of this award term) may receive a subaward from you until the entity has provided its UEI to you.
- May not make a subaward to an entity unless the entity has provided its UEI Ito you. Sub- grantees are not required to obtain an active SAM registration but must obtain a UEI.

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 $30,000 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). 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 UEI prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to cooperative agreement recipients upon award.

Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

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. FAPIIS is designed to address these requirements. FAPIIS contains integrity and performance information from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, information from SAM.gov, 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.

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 *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests*
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 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 the FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at FOIA@usda.gov.

USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Privacy Policy

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service does not collect any personal identifiable information without explicit consent. To view USDA's Privacy Policy, visit: 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

This cooperative agreement will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations within 2 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)"
7 CFR Part 16: "Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations"
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 (T&Cs) of FNS grant awards may be obtained electronically in advance of an award. For a copy of T&Cs, please contact the Grant Officer noted in Section 7 – Federal Awarding Agency Contacts of this RFA.

Reporting Requirements

Financial Reports

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425 (Federal Financial Report) 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, verify their identity, and submit an FNS-674 form, which will be provided by the Grant Officer to access FPRS. A final Financial Status report is due 120 days after the termination date. For additional information on FPRS, visit fprs.fns.usda.gov.

Performance Progress Reports (PPR)

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports to FNS 30 days following the end of each quarterly period, using the FNS-908 PPR form that will be sent to grantees at the time of award or the initial orientation. The reports should cover the preceding period of activity. A final report identifying the accomplishments and results of the project will be due 120 days after the end date of the award.

Please note: The FNS-908 PPR form specific to this opportunity will be sent to grantees at the time of award or the initial orientation. Use of the FNS-908 PPR form for progress reports is required. Previous grantees that have not submitted reports timely will be evaluated as high risk. All activities reported on the FNS-908 must align with the required objective(s) from the "Key Objectives" Section above.

Final Reports

Within 120 days after the end of the grant period, awardees are to submit a final report to FNS. The purpose of the final report is to summarize all information and data collected over the entire period of performance of the cooperative agreement.

Each awardee must submit all relevant final deliverables that are 508-compliant to the Child Nutrition Sharing Site (CNSS) prior to submitting the final report to FNS. All deliverables also should be placed in a shared file storage site, rather than shared as a link. Deliverables include all grant-developed materials, photos with accompanying releases, and success stories.

To promote transparency of grant-funded work, FNS reserves the right to publish awardees final reports, trainings, resources, or other materials created during the period of performance on the FNS website and/or the CNSS.

Final Deliverables

Awardees must electronically submit or transfer a set of final grant materials that are 508- compliant (e.g., training curricula, images) as part of their final report. Ensure use of all USDA logos, graphics have USDA approval and are used in accordance with the USDA Style Guide.

Awardees should submit at least the following final deliverables (not an exhaustive list):

- Success stories.
- Best practices, barriers, and challenges in increasing the use of traditional Indigenous foods in the CNP and providing nutrition education to students to accompany the traditional Indigenous foods included in the meals.
- Any resources, trainings, or technical assistance materials created as part of the cooperative agreement.
- All illustrations, graphics, fonts, or other files for professional printing, social media and web posting in JPEG, PDF and/or TIFF format.

A minimum of five high-resolution (300 pixels per inch, minimum) photographs featuring the cooperative agreement project(s) in action and accompanying signed photo releases

7. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this solicitation, please contact the Grant Officer.

Anita Kirk, Grant Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
Email to: anita.kirk@usda.gov

8. Other Information

Debriefing Requests

Non-selected applicants may request a debriefing to discuss the strengths and weakness 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. FNS reserves the right to provide this debriefing orally or in written format.

Data Collection and Ownership

Any data, electronic files, or webpages developed or created from this Initiative are the property of USDA FNS. At the end of the cooperative agreement, all materials, data, electronic files, or webpages will be the property of USDA FNS and must be securely transmitted to USDA FNS. The cooperator shall provide USDA FNS with appropriate releases for all photographs, images, and other materials as directed, giving USDA sole ownership with unlimited rights to the use of the materials, including the right to redistribute, use, and print items without restriction. Any materials developed under this grant can be used/shared/reproduced by USDA.

Appendix

RFA Budget Narrative Checklist

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

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.

ITEM	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?		

ITEM	YES	NO
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 and hourly wages per hour, 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 within "Other" 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 a cognizant Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most recent and signed negotiated rate agreement must be provided along with the application.		
2 CFR 200 allows any non-Federal entity (NFE) that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate to charge a de Minimis rate of **10%** of modified total direct costs (MTDC), which the NFE may use indefinitely as a Federally-negotiated rate.		

FNS-906 Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire

This form is required. Please submit this questionnaire along with your applicant package.

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.

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION
Legal Organization Name: _____
UEI 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? ***(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).***	☐	☐
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.

_____ _____

Signature of Authorized Representative Date

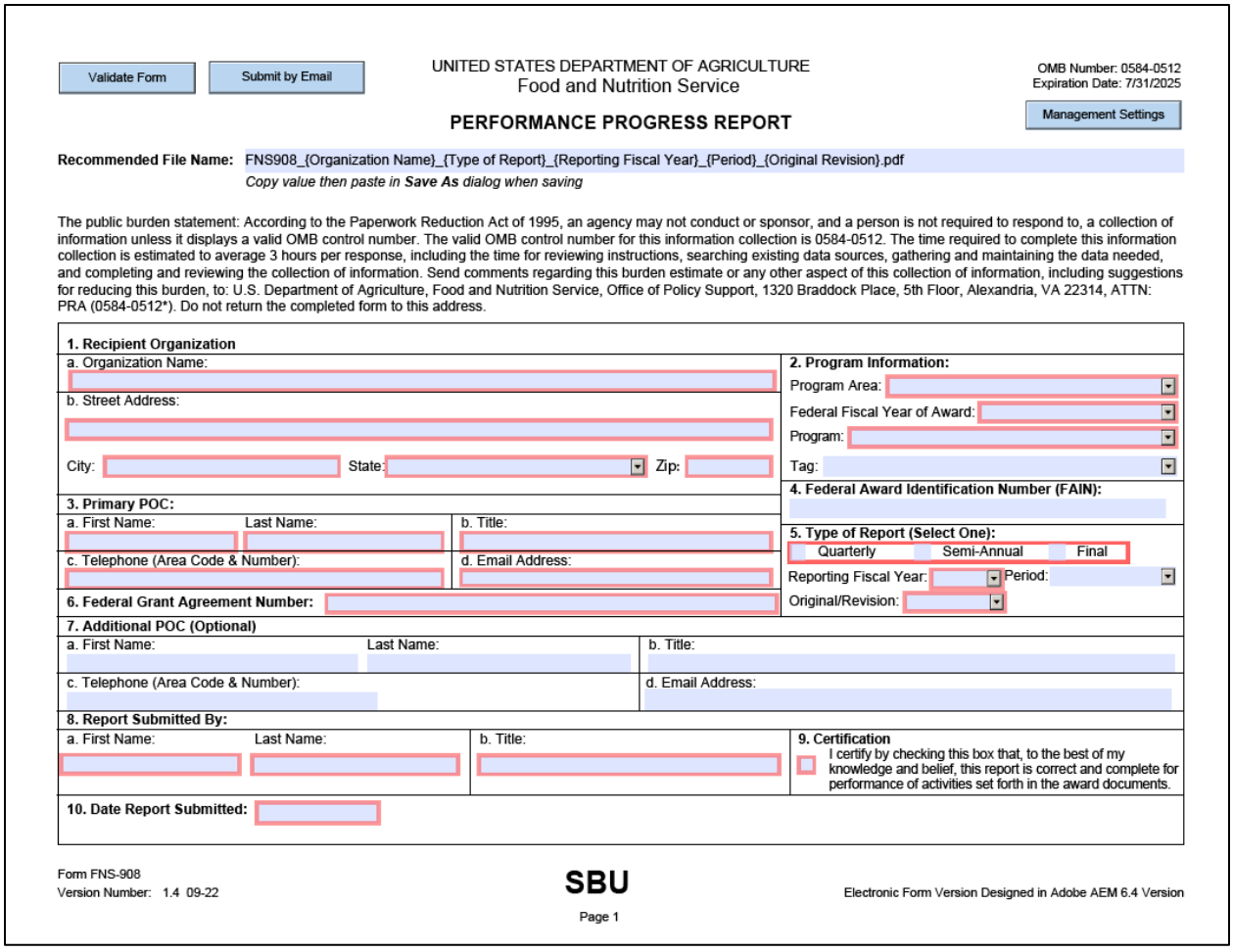
Name of Authorized Representative: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR)

FOR REFERENCE ONLY.



Validate Form | Submit by Email

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Food and Nutrition Service

OMB Number: 0584-0512
Expiration Date: 7/31/2025

Management Settings

PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT

Recommended File Name: FNS908_{Organization Name}_{Type of Report}_{Reporting Fiscal Year}_{Period}_{Original Revision}.pdf
*Copy value then paste in **Save As** dialog when saving*

The public burden statement: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-0512*). Do not return the completed form to this address.

1. Recipient Organization

a. Organization Name:

b. Street Address:

City: State: Zip:

2. Program Information:

Program Area:

Federal Fiscal Year of Award:

Program:

Tag:

3. Primary POC:

a. First Name: Last Name: b. Title:

c. Telephone (Area Code & Number): d. Email Address:

4. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN):

5. Type of Report (Select One):

Quarterly Semi-Annual Final

Reporting Fiscal Year: Period:

Original/Revision:

6. Federal Grant Agreement Number:

7. Additional POC (Optional)

a. First Name: Last Name: b. Title:

c. Telephone (Area Code & Number): d. Email Address:

8. Report Submitted By:

a. First Name: Last Name: b. Title:

9. Certification

I certify by checking this box that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this report is correct and complete for performance of activities set forth in the award documents.

10. Date Report Submitted:

Form FNS-908
Version Number: 1.4 09-22

SBU

Page 1

Electronic Form Version Designed in Adobe AEM 6.4 Version

Program Management Information

1. Progress Summary

Provide summary of progress this reporting period, highlighting your greatest achievements and challenges to date in this reporting period. For challenges, how did you resolve or overcome them? (Max 2000 characters):

2. Personnel Information

a. Number of FTEs: b. Were there any changes in key personnel? Yes No

c. If yes, please describe the changes in key personnel, including the individual leaving/joining the project as well as the name and contact information (email address, phone number, and name of organization) of the individual. Note: This information does not serve as a formal request to approve the change in key personnel. This request must be forwarded to the Grants Officer in a separate request (Max 2000 Characters):

3. Projected Amendments (Cost and No-Cost)

a. Number of amendments projected this upcoming quarter?

b. Do the projected amendment(s) require FNS approval? Yes No

c. Please describe the type of amendment(s) projected and justification for each. Note: This information does not serve as a formal request to approve amendments. This request must be forwarded to the Grants Officer in a separate request (Max 2000 characters:):

4. Expenditures/Purchases:

a. Were there any significant expenditures or purchases, including any contracts entered during this reporting period? Yes No

b. If so, please describe (Max 2000 Characters):

5. Deviations (Changes this quarter outside of the agreed upon budget, timeline, or scope):

a. Have there been any deviations? Yes No b. Type: Budget Timeline Scope Other

c. Describe any deviation(s), including a justification and impacts to budget/timeline (Max 2000 characters):

d. Please describe proposed activities to mitigate the impact of the deviation(s) (Max 2000 characters):

Program Management Information (Continued)

6. Upcoming Activities and Anticipated Changes

a. Please describe activities planned for next quarter (Max 2000 Characters):

b. Do you anticipate any changes in your project timeline, activities or cost? Yes No

c. If yes, please explain the anticipated changes (Max 2000 Characters):

7. Final Reporting Summary (Final Reporting Period Only)

a. Are all goals and objectives completed at this time? Yes No

b. If no to answer 7a, briefly describe the goals and objectives that were not completed and why they were not completed (Max 2000 Characters):

c. Was the project budget sufficient for meeting the project goals? Yes No

d. If no to answer 7c, briefly describe why the budget was insufficient for meeting the project goals (Max 2000 Characters):

8. Additional Comments (Max 2000 Characters)

Instructions: Complete this section by adding all Activities and Indicators as listed on your submitted proposal for each listed objective. For each reporting period, update these Activities/ Indicators with the most up to date information. **Note:** Objectives will be added by FNS and should not be altered. Additionally, note that indicator values vary by Indicator Type selected.

Program Activities

Objective 1							
- 1 +	Activity	Type	Anticipated Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Optional		
					Location	Beneficiaries/ Audience	Topic (if training)

Indicator Description	Indicator Type	Target	Actual (Cumulative)	Comments
- 1 +				

Add Objective | Remove Objective