

OMB BURDEN STATEMENT: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are 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 **40** 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

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Child Nutrition Programs

Fiscal Year 2017

Child Nutrition Technology Innovation Grants

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

CFDA#: 10.541

DATES:

Request for Application Release Date: **October 27, 2016**

Application Submission Due Date: **January 25, 2017**

Grant Award Date Approximately: **April 25, 2017**

Contents

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	4
FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION.....	4
Purpose of Grant Funding.....	4
CN Technology Innovation Grant Types.....	5
Planning Grants.....	6
Implementation Grants.....	7
Application and Review Dates.....	7
Award Periods.....	8
ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	8
Eligible Applicants.....	8
Pre-application Screening Requirements	8
Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations	10
Other Eligibility Criteria	10
APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION.....	10
Accessing RFA Package	10
Application Format	11
Application Content	11
Special Instructions.....	11
Required Grant Application Forms.....	11
(A) Non-Construction Grant Projects Forms: SF-424 Family.....	11
(B) SF LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities)	12
(C) Additional Required Forms and Information.....	12
DUNS Number.....	12
SAM Registration	12
Grants.gov Registration	13
Submission Dates and Times	14
Funding Restrictions	14
APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION	15
Review Criteria	15
Review and Selection Process.....	15

Projects that Include USDA Place Based Initiatives and Promise Zone-certified applicants	15
Scoring for Planning Grant Applications:.....	15
Scoring for Implementation Grant Applications:.....	16
Selection Process	17
Determination of Award Amounts.....	18
Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Date	18
FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION	18
Federal Award Notice	18
Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	19
<i>Confidentiality of an Application</i>	19
<i>Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality of the Review Process</i>	19
Administrative Regulations.....	19
Code of Federal Regulations and Other Government Requirements.....	20
Reporting	21
Financial Reporting.....	21
Progress Reporting.....	22
FEDERAL AWARDED AGENCY CONTACTS.....	22
OTHER INFORMATION	22
Debriefing Requests.....	22
Projects that Include U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Place Based Initiatives	22
RFA APPLICATION CHECKLIST.....	24

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law 114-113 December 18, 2015, authorized funding to be used for grants to States for the purpose of developing or improving current automated information systems used to operate and manage the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has approximately \$4.4 million available in fiscal year (FY) 2017 to be used for grants under this funding. This Request for Applications (RFA) invites State agencies that administer the CNPs to apply for grant funding to implement innovative technology solutions that will improve program accountability, data accuracy, program performance measurement, and the capacity to identify and target error-prone areas (locations or program functions) within and across the CNPs at the State and Local Educational Agency (LEA) or Sponsor Organization (SO) levels.

The Child Nutrition Technology Innovation Grant (CN TIG) funds will be available on a competitive basis to State agencies administering the CNPs (i.e., National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program). FNS is offering two types of CN TIGs: Planning Grants and Implementation Grants. States may apply for *either* a Planning Grant *or* an Implementation Grant, as described within this RFA, but *not both* under this 2017 RFA solicitation.

This RFA describes:

- Types of grants available;
- Which entities are eligible to apply for grant funds;
- Requirements for submitting a successful application;
- How applications will be reviewed and selected; and
- Terms and conditions that grantees must adhere to.

FNS intends to work collaboratively with grant applicants and grantees throughout the application process and the life of grants awarded through this RFA. Within approximately three weeks of this RFA's publication, FNS will conduct a webinar with all State agencies and FNS Regional Offices to review the RFA and address questions regarding the application process. Notification of the webinar date, time and call-in information will be communicated to State agencies via the FNS Regional Offices and the FNS PartnerWeb at <https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov>.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Purpose of Grant Funding

This grant opportunity is intended to encourage State agencies that administer the CNPs to propose innovative technology solutions that improve program accountability and efficiencies at both the State and local levels. Currently, State agencies administering the CNPs maintain automated systems at the State level that rely on operational data from the local levels including, but not limited to, program applications, eligibility certifications (including direct certification),

verification (including direct verification), meal counting and claiming, menu planning, program monitoring, and program reporting. Generally, LEAs and SOs operate automated systems, manual systems or a combination thereof to capture the local program data reported to the State agency. For example, local agencies within a given State may be using 30 or more local software systems to report program data to the State agency. In addition, there are LEAs and SOs that do not use an automated method (i.e., a manual/paper system) to capture and report Program data to the State agency or to receive Program data directly from the site level. This creates duplication of effort, increased possibility of errors, and reduced visibility of program operations for monitoring purposes.

The CN TIGs can be used to bridge such gaps in automation. For example, the funds could be used to create virtual statewide systems where the State agency either: 1) provides LEAs/SOs/sites access to software modules related to specific program operations within their larger State-level integrated systems; or 2) works with LEAs/SOs to develop interfaces to connect them with the State system in such a way that they perform seamlessly without duplicating effort, yet remaining as separate systems.

In developing the CN TIG applications for FY 2017, State agencies should focus on one or more of the following methods to develop uniform systems that could provide automation between State and local levels:

- web-based software;
- uniform interfaces between diverse systems;
- technology equipment and/or software; and/or
- other innovative business automation solutions to improve program operation efficiencies, accountability, monitoring and overall program integrity at the State and local levels.

CN Technology Innovation Grant Types

The FY 2017 CN TIG award process involves two types of awards:

- CN Technology Innovation Planning Grants for awards up to **\$100,000** with grant periods of up to **one year**; and
- CN Technology Innovation Implementation Grants for awards up to **\$2,000,000** with grant periods of **one to three** years.

State agencies may apply for either type of grant (i.e., Planning or Implementation), **but not both** in a given RFA solicitation. **Only one grant application will be accepted from a State agency in response to this solicitation.** In addition to this section, see the section on **Application and Submission Information** for information on the required content for a grant application submission.

FNS will award these funds in the form of a **cooperative agreement** to allow FNS more active participation with the cooperator during both project development and project execution. Examples of FNS participation include activities such as the following:

- Ongoing evaluation of quarterly progress and financial reports to monitor the grantee's project activities and ensure that the objectives, terms and conditions of the agreement are met;

- Periodic on-site and off-site technical assistance to provide evaluation and guidance on project activities and outputs as they relate to CNP objectives, including:
 - Evaluation of technology improvements;
 - Review of project plans and milestones;
 - Review of procurement documents for sub-grantee involvement (i.e., requests for proposals, contracts, performance work statements, and project plans); and
 - Other technical assistance related to project objectives; and
- Periodic collaborative meetings for multiple grantees for the purposes of technical assistance, training, problem solving and sharing successful or promising practices. Meetings may be conducted as webinars or teleconferences. If awarded a CN TIG, in-person training events, including participation in the annual Child Nutrition Access and Accountability through Technology (CNAAT) national training, will be required. The CNAAT Training event will be a three-day event held each fall located in the Washington, D.C. area or in another city more centrally located within the contiguous United States.

Planning Grants

Planning Grants are intended for State agencies administering the CNPs that know they need to reduce data communication errors in LEAs/SOs, but may need to conduct additional *research* to identify the most effective way to decrease errors and improve program operations and data integrity. Therefore, potential uses of Planning Grant funds include, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- Feasibility studies and cost/benefit analyses to plan for automation projects;
- Conducting an internal review of the State's/LEAs/SOs data processes;
- Hiring a contractor or university to conduct a study of the processes and recommend solutions; or
- Consulting with stakeholders.

State agencies that are awarded Planning Grants from this solicitation may apply for funding for an Implementation Grant at the next annual opportunity, should funds be made available, in order to carry out an implementation project in follow-up to their Planning Grant activities and outcomes. However, there is no guarantee that grant funding will be available to the State for implementation projects in future years. Therefore, FNS encourages State agencies to apply for a Planning Grant to conduct activities that would be beneficial in helping them reduce program communication errors, even if the agency may have to rely on other resources (i.e., State Administrative Expense Funds or other sources) to implement solutions identified as a result of the Planning Grant activities.

State agencies must address all of the questions in **Appendix B: FY 2017 CN Technology Innovation Planning Grant, Proposal Narrative and Instructions** to develop a Planning Grant application. The instructions are designed to assist State agencies in developing a fully responsive Planning Grant application for viable planning activities and to bring consistency to the proposal process for evaluation purposes. If the applicant fails to address these issues, points will be deducted from the overall score.

The maximum amount of any *single* Planning grant is **\$100,000**. However, FNS retains authority to award less than the amount requested in the grant application.

Implementation Grants

Implementation Grants are intended for State agencies administering the CNPs that know *what* they need to do to implement solutions, but lack the funds to support their implementation project. State agencies must address all of the questions in the **Appendix C: FY 2017 CN Technology Innovation Implementation Grant, Proposal Template and Instructions** to develop an Implementation Grant application. The instructions are designed to 1) guide applicants in thinking through all aspects of implementing proposed solutions, with particular emphasis on reducing risks associated with technology related aspects of their proposals, and 2) assist applicants in considering and capturing budget items such as, but not limited to, costs for personnel, hiring contractors, purchasing equipment, developing training, supplies and travel (including travel for State agency staff to attend the three-day annual CNAAT Training event for grantee States). Following the guidance in Appendix C will assist applicants in developing fully responsive Implementation grant applications and help to bring consistency to the proposal process for evaluation purposes.

The maximum amount of any *single* Implementation Grant is **\$2,000,000**. However, FNS retains authority to award less than the amount requested by an applicant. The Implementation Grants will likely vary significantly, based on differences in project scope, the responsiveness of application packages, and clarity of demonstrated need.

NOTE: Applicants for the Implementation Grant must include in their budget estimates the following FNS sponsored collaborative activities for each year of the requested grant period of performance:

- Estimated cost of travel and time for two State project staff to participate in an annual CNAAT Training event held in the fall for three full days at a location to be determined. Note: for budgeting purposes, State agencies should use Washington, DC as the location for the meeting (costs should be itemized);
- Grant personnel costs to participate in webinars (generally two per year, one hour each); and
- Personnel and contractor costs for preparation and participation in technical assistance and evaluation State site visits (approximately one per year at one full day each) and conference calls (approximately two per year at two hours each) with FNS contractors and staff.

The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Narrative Justification, Standard Form 424, and Standard Form 424A (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs). Sufficient funds should be budgeted in the proposal and reserved in the course of the project to meet this requirement.

Application and Review Dates

The deadline for submitting Planning Grant and Implementation Grant applications may be found in the section on **Application and Submission Information**. FNS anticipates awarding grants within approximately 90 days from the application deadline.

Award Periods

The award period for the FY 2017 Planning Grants and Implementation Grants will be as follows, beginning from the date of the award:

- Planning Grants will be awarded for up to one year; and
- Implementation Grants will be awarded for up to three years.

All grant funds must be obligated and all program activities under the grant (other than activities relating to the close out of the grant) must be completed by the end of the award period. The close-out of the grant must occur no later than 90 days following the termination date of the agreement, and all obligations incurred under the grant must be liquidated by this date. Any funds that are not liquidated within 90 days following the end of the award period must be returned to FNS. In addition, the final progress reports are due to FNS no later than 90 days following the end of the award period. Please see the section on **Federal Award Administration Information** for details on reporting requirements.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include all State agencies that administer CNPs, including National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program. In this instance, the term State agency means 1) the State educational agency; and 2) any other agency of the State which has been designated by the Governor or other appropriate executive or legislative authority of the State and approved by USDA to administer the above-mentioned programs. Only one grant application (planning or implementation) will be accepted from a State agency in response to this solicitation. However, in instances where there are two agencies within a State who operate FNS CNPs, such as in the case where the public and private agencies are different, separate applications are acceptable.

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 FNS imposing special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed. The Federal repository systems FNS will review include:

- SAM, the System for Award Management, the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registration (CCR), Federal Agency Registration (FedReg), Online Registrations and Certification Application (ORCA), and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS);
- FAPIIS, the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System, is a database that has been established to track contractor misconduct and performance;
- Dun and Bradstreet (D&B), the system where applicants establish a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (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.

Applicants must also respond to the pre-application assessment questions listed 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. (See Appendix D, Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire) 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.

1. Has your organization received a Federal award within the past 3 years?
Yes_____ No_____
2. Does your organization utilize accounting software to manage your financial records?
Yes_____ No_____
3. Does your accounting system identify the receipt and expenditure of program funds separately for each grant?
Yes_____ No_____
4. Does your organization have a dedicated individual responsible for monitoring organizational funds, such as an accountant or a finance manager?
Yes_____ No_____
5. Is there a separation of duties for staff handling the approval of transactions and the recording and payment of funds?
Yes_____ No_____
6. Does your organization have the ability to specifically identify and allocate employee effort to an applicable program?
Yes_____ No_____
7. Does your organization have a property/inventory management system in place to track the location and value of equipment purchased under the award?
Yes_____ No_____
8. Has your organization been audited within the last 5 fiscal years?
Yes_____ No_____

9. If the answer to question number 8 is yes, was this report issued under the Single Audit requirement? If no, a hyperlink or copy of the report will be required.
Yes_____ No_____
10. If answer to question 8 is yes, was there a “Qualified Opinion” or “Adverse Opinion”?
Yes_____ No_____
11. If answer to question 8 is yes, is there a material weakness disclosed?
Yes_____ No_____
12. If answer to question 8 is yes, is there a significant deficiency disclosed?
Yes_____ No_____

Applications received after the deadline date (see the section on **Application and Submission Information**) will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications. Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, and certification will result in a reduced panel score (see the section on **Application and Submission Information** and **Appendices B and C**). Also, applications not submitted via the www.grants.gov portal will not be considered (see the section on **Application and Submission Information**).

Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations

There are no cost sharing or matching requirements to participate in either the Planning or Implementation Grant projects.

Other Eligibility Criteria

Suspended or debarred organizations are ineligible to submit applications in response to this grant solicitation. State agencies may apply for either type of grant (i.e., Planning or Implementation), but not both in a given RFA solicitation

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Accessing RFA Package

Applicants may obtain the RFA package by downloading the application from Grants.gov at www.grants.gov.

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

Carla Garcia, Grant Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandria, VA 22302
E-mail: carla.garcia@fns.usda.gov

Application Format

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following applicant format:

- “8 ½ by 11” page size on white paper with at least 1 inch margins on the top and bottom;
- All pages single spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font size (smaller font may be used in tables, charts and graphs as long as they are clearly readable);
- The project description with relevant information (not including the cover sheet, table of contents, resumes, letter of commitment(s), endorsement letter(s), budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms) should be captured on no more than:
 - **10-page** maximum length for CN Technology Innovation Planning Grant narrative response to **Appendix B**;
 - **35-page** maximum length for CN Technology Innovation Implementation Grant narrative response to **Appendix C**; and
 - All pages, excluding the form pages, must be sequentially numbered.

Application Content

To be considered complete, the CN TIG application must include all the required documents and information listed in the Table 1 below for the specific type of grant (i.e., Planning or Implementation Grant). Applications that include all OMB approved forms, listed on Grants.gov will be considered for an award. However, if other required information is not included in the submission this will result in a lower panel score.

Special Instructions

- Late application submission will not be considered in this competition. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received.
- Applications not submitted via the Grants.gov portal will not be considered.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through the grants.gov web portal 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.
- FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in future fiscal years should additional funds be made available.
- Grant awards are subject to the availability of funds.
- There are no cost sharing or matching requirements to participate in either the Planning or Implementation grant projects.

Required Grant Application Forms

The required grants.gov forms are located at:

http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aforms_repository_information.jsp:

(A) Non-Construction Grant Projects Forms: SF-424 Family

- Application and Instruction for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information and Instruction (SF-424A)
- Assurance-Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)

(B) SF LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities)

- Indicate on the form whether your organization intends to conduct lobbying activities. If your organization does not intend to lobby, write “Not Applicable.”

(C) Additional Required Forms and Information

- DUNS number. Please see below for further information.
- SAM registration. Please see below for further information.

DUNS Number

In order to submit an application via grants.gov, applicants must have obtained a DUNS number and registered in both the new SAM and on grants.gov. The applicant is strongly advised to allow ample time to initiate the grants.gov application submission process. 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/>).

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 you can 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 EST. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number. Obtaining a DUNS number may take several days to obtain.

SAM Registration

What is 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.acquisition.gov/SAM_Guides/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registrations%20v1.pdf

Below is some additional information that should assist the applicant through this process:

SAM Registration: For applicant organizations that were previously registered in the CCR, relevant applicant information is already in SAM; set up a SAM account as necessary to update any information. To register in SAM, the applicant’s DUNS number, Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on the applicant’s last tax return) are all required. SAM verifies all information submitted by the applicant using several systems. This verification takes at least **48 hours** after your registration is submitted to SAM. Applicants must have a valid SAM registration no later than 5 business days prior to the application due date of this solicitation. **Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete and active should contact SAM at:**

https://www.fsd.gov/fsd-gov/learning-center-system.do?sysparm_system=SAM.

SAM Presentation/Training

GSA has created a presentation of a SAM training. To view the presentation, please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmHcKCchaiY>

This will be extremely useful for SAM users that are:

- Registering at SAM for the first time
- Setting up user permissions from CCR into the SAM registration (called migrating)
- Updating / renewing CCR record in SAM

PLEASE BE AWARE: In some instances the process to complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of the entity record will require **5-7 days or more**. We strongly encourage grantees to begin the process at least **3 weeks before** the due date of the grant solicitation.

Grants.gov Registration

In order to apply for a grant, your organization must have completed the above registrations as well as register on Grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process can be accessed at www.grants.govapplicants/get_registered.jsp. Generally, the registration process takes between **3-5 business days, however this registration may take longer**.

If you are a new user, please ensure that your organization's Point-of-Contact (POC) has designated you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). **If you are not designated as an AOR, you will be unable to submit your application package through the grants.gov web portal.**

Allow your entity ample time to complete the necessary steps, for the submission of your grant application package, on grants.gov. Please be aware that the grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted.

NOTICE: Special Characters 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 DUNS number and registered in both the new 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 current 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>.

Submission Dates and Times

APPLICATION DUE DATE

The complete application must be uploaded on www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time **January 25, 2017**. 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. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications.

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**.

Funding Restrictions

Pre-award costs: 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.

Table 1: Planning and Implementation Application Content	
Required Documents	Explanation
Cover Sheet	At a minimum, include: • State agency name and mailing address; • Agency Administrator's name, job title, phone number, e-mail and Fax contact information; • Primary application contact person's name, job title, phone number and e-mail address; and • Grant program title and subprogram title (if applicable)
Table of Contents	Include relevant topic page numbers.
Application Project Summary	Brief abstract clearly summarizing the proposed project activities, goals and objectives, as well as anticipated solutions and outcomes that would result if the proposal is funded (maximum 250 words).
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.
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.
Required Forms and Other Documentation	• SF-424, • SF-424A, • SF-424B, and • SF-LLL

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Review Criteria

FNS will evaluate the applications in accordance with the criteria outlined in this section to select applications for awards. The actual number of awards will depend on the quality of the applications and the availability of funds. Funds will be made available via a Cooperative Agreement award document following the award announcements. There are no cost sharing or matching requirements to participate in either the Planning or Implementation Grant projects.

FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure that they contain the required documents and information. Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements:

- Submitted by eligible applicants (see section on **Eligibility Information**);
- Submitted on or before the required deadline (see section on **Application and Submission Information**); and
- Are in the required format (see section on **Application and Submission Information**).

Review and Selection Process

Following the initial screening process, FNS will assemble a peer panel group to review and determine the technical merits of each application. The peer panel will evaluate the proposals based on how well they address the required application components. The panel will assign each application a score using the evaluation criteria and weights as specified below for each Planning or Implementation Grant application evaluation component. The peer panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on the evaluation scoring. The selecting officials reserve 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 through future appropriations.

NOTE: If a discrepancy exists between the total funding request (submitted on SF-424, SF-424A, and the 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.

Projects that Include USDA Place Based Initiatives and Promise Zone-certified applicants

Proposals with projects that include interventions in communities that have been designated USDA Place Based Initiatives will receive five (5) bonus points. See section below on **Other Information**.

Scoring for Planning Grant Applications:

Project Purpose, Goals and Impact on Program Integrity (35 points)

- The significance of the data communication or other operational errors, or the risk of these errors, to be addressed is clearly demonstrated and proposed planning activities are appropriate to address the data communication and/or operational errors identified;

- The project goals and objectives are in line with the Planning Grant focus areas and purpose of the funding described in **Federal Award Information** above;
- The planning activities to be completed during the grant period clearly support the purpose of the grant;
- The proposed project includes a planning methodology that, if followed, is likely to result in the State agency meeting the goals of the Planning grant project; and
- The performance measures and methods for evaluating project goals and objectives during the grant period and impact to program integrity, if planning methodology followed, are realistic, measureable and clearly defined.

Project Planning Design and Management (35 points)

- The project organization, project management approach (including staffing, procurement of contractors, communications planning, quality assurance planning, risk management planning, partnering with appropriate stakeholders, tracking timelines, monitoring progress, etc.) indicate that the applicant has the capacity to manage and execute the planning project successfully to meet the goals of the project; and
- The scope and timeline proposed for the project are reasonable and attainable during the Planning Grant time frame.

Budget Plan (20 points)

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

Sustainability and Transferability (10 points)

- The proposed planning project is likely to produce outcomes and information that not only will aid the applicant State agency in implementing program improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects; and
- The applicant demonstrates that the State agency has the capacity to implement program improvements in follow-up to the Planning Grant activities, when Planning Grant funding ends.

Scoring for Implementation Grant Applications:

Project Purpose, Goals and Impact on Program Integrity (35 points)

- The significance of the data communication or other operational errors, or the risk of these errors, to be addressed is clearly demonstrated and proposed implementation activities are appropriate to address the data communication errors identified;
- The project goals and objectives are in line with the Implementation Grant focus areas and purpose of the funding described in **Federal Award Information** above;
- The implementation activities to be completed during the grant period clearly support the seamless flow of program data from the school/site level to the LEA/SO and State levels

and are likely to result in significant improvements in data accuracy and program operations; and

- The performance measures and methods for evaluating project performance during the grant period and impact to program integrity after project completion are realistic, measureable and clearly defined.

Project Planning, Design and Management (35 points)

- The project organization, 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.) indicate that the applicant has the capacity to manage and execute the implementation project successfully to meet the goals of the project; and
- The scope and timeline proposed for the project are reasonable and attainable during the Implementation 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 and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives;
- The budget includes a line item description for every estimated cost and shows how it supports the project goals;
- Budget calculations and documentation is complete and show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated; and
- 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.

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 program improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects; and
- The applicant demonstrates that the State agency has the capacity to implement and sustain the program improvements resulting from the Implementation grant activities after the Implementation Grant funding ends.

Selection Process

After evaluation and scoring, grant applications will be arrayed by type (planning or implementation) and by score within the type, starting with the highest score. Applications with the highest scores for each type will be recommended to receive funding.

Grantees will be recommended on a competitive basis, based on an objective review of their proposals according to the technical evaluation criteria outlined in this RFA. A list of all applications deemed eligible for award will be submitted to the Selection Official for a final decision regarding funding. The Selection Official has ultimate authority to decide which applications are approved and funded, and *generally* will adhere to the recommendations made

by the reviewers, provided that funding is available. However, the Selection Official reserves the right to award a grant to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, or project diversity. The Selection Official may take other factors into account when granting awards and/or not awarding a particular award.

Other USDA or FNS priorities the Selection Official may consider include, but are not limited to, the innovation demonstrated in an application, agency priorities, and the scores assigned by the technical review panels. The Selection Official may also determine that, based on their scores, few of the applications are of technical merit. In such a case, FNS may make fewer awards or smaller awards than expected, or make no awards. In addition, FNS reserves the option to select one or more lower rated applications in order to achieve a diversity of projects and regional representation. 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 through future appropriations.

Determination of Award Amounts

As part of the technical review process, FNS will review applicants' proposed budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable and applicable. Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, FNS reserves the right to fund applications out of rank order to achieve priorities identified earlier; or at lesser amounts if FNS determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

FNS will review and consider the merit of each grant application and reserves the right to fund only those applications that are able to demonstrate their capability to improve their State's administrative processes and error rates. Additionally, FNS may adjust the amounts requested in the application to ensure that funds are made available at appropriate levels. FNS also reserves the right to suspend or terminate an award for materially failing to perform in accordance with a State's application.

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Date

The anticipated award date is **April 25, 2017**.

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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, FNS 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. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

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. 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

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

A recipient chosen for an award must 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 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 D&B 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 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 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 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 FOIA process, please contact Jennifer Weatherly, FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at FOIA@fns.usda.gov.

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:

Carla Garcia, Grant Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandria, VA 22301
E-mail: carla.garcia@fns.usda.gov

Reporting

All State agencies receiving FY 2017 CN TIGs are required to submit the following reports in accordance with the deadlines noted.

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. More detailed instructions for reporting will be included in the FNS Federal financial assistance award package.

Progress Reporting

The recipient will be responsible for managing and monitoring the progress of the grant project activities and performance. The award document 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.

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

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

Carla Garcia, Grants Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail: carla.garcia@fns.usda.gov

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.

Projects that Include U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Place Based Initiatives

Proposals with projects that include interventions in communities that have been designated as USDA Place Based Initiatives may receive priority consideration. The USDA Place Based Initiatives include but are not limited to:

- **StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity (SF)** – StrikeForce aims to create self-sustaining, long-term economic development in persistent poverty rural communities by increasing investment through intensive outreach and stronger partnership with community leaders, businesses, and foundations. StrikeForce seeks to improve food security by increasing access to safe and nutritious foods.
- **Promise Zones (PZ)** - Promise Zones are part of the President's plan where the Federal government partners with and invests in selected high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities. Promise Zones leverage Federal resources to build up existing local capacity to create jobs, increase economic security, leverage private investment, expand educational opportunities, increase access to quality affordable housing, reduce violent crime and improve public safety.
- **White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2)** – As part of the President's priority to strengthen the middle class, create jobs, and build ladders of opportunity, SC2 seeks to increase cooperation between community organizations, local leadership, and the federal government. SC2 pairs on the ground Federal inter-agency teams with the Mayor and city leadership to support the community's vision for

economic development. These SC2 Teams offer technical assistance and expertise to help leverage existing Federal resources to grow local capacity and stimulate economic growth in distressed areas.

- **Partnership for Sustainable Communities** - The Partnership for Sustainable Communities works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.
- **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)** - KYF2 strengthens the connection between farmers and consumers to better meet critical goals, including reinvigorating rural economies, promoting job growth, and increasing healthy and local food access in America. Through KYF2, USDA integrates programs and policies that stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development, foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers, and cultivate healthy eating habits and educated consumers.

RFA APPLICATION CHECKLIST

All proposals submitted under this RFA must contain the applicable elements as described in this announcement. The application must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on **January 25, 2017**. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the proposal is complete and in the proper order prior to submission.

- ✓ Read the RFA carefully, usually more than once.
- ✓ Have you obtained a DUNS number and registered the number in the SAM?
- ✓ Have you verified that your SAM is active?
- ✓ Have you registered your entity in grants.gov and are you authorized as a user in grants.gov to submit on behalf of your agency?
- ✓ Have you prepared and submitted the appropriate forms as shown under the Required Grant Applicant Forms section of this RFA?
- ✓ Have you included the RFA CFDA #10.541 on your application?
- ✓ Have you included your contact information: telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address?
- ✓ Have you addressed, met, and considered any program specific requirements or restrictions?
- ✓ Is the project's proposal clearly stated?
 - Does it comply with any format requirements?
 - Does it comply with the page limitation?
 - Most importantly does it directly relate to the RFA's objectives and priorities?
 - Don't assume that reviewers know anything about your organization and its work.
- ✓ Have one or more persons read your proposal who did not participate in its writing and ensure that it was clear to them?
- ✓ Does the proposed project and budget meet the bona fide needs of the RFA?
- ✓ Is the budget summary included?
 - Does it agree with the calculations shown on the OMB budget form?
 - Is the budget in line with the project description?
- ✓ Be sure to submit a timely application into www.Grants.gov in order to meet the RFA application deadline.
- ✓ FNS reserves the right to request additional information not clearly addressed in the initial application.