



School Foodservice Workforce Study- Cooperative Agreement

Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Applications (RFA)

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Anticipated Award Date: March 15, 2024

OMB Burden Statement: The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The estimated average time required to complete this information collection is 8 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. 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 Services, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0512).

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

This Application Checklist provides applicants with a list of the required documents. 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:

1. Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number;
2. Register the UEI number in the System for Award Management (SAM); and,
3. Register in Grants.gov.

When **preparing your application**, ensure:

- Application format and narrative meet the requirements included in Section IV “Application and Submission Information.” This includes page limits, priorities outlined in Section IV, 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 justifications and basis for lodging estimates.
- Types of equipment and supplies, justifications, and estimates, ensuring that the budget is in line with the project description.
- Information for all contracts and justification for any sole-source contracts.
- Justification, description and itemized list of all consultant services.
- Indirect cost information (either a copy of a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or if no agreement exists and the applicant has never been approved for a NICRA, they may charge up to 10% de minimis). If applicant is requesting the de minimis rate or indirect costs are not requested, please indicate this in the budget narrative.

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

- SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-424A – Budget Information and Instruction Form (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-424B – Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- FNS-906 – Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire (Appendix IV)
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF - Upload using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15)

Table of Contents

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES	5
Introduction	5
Purpose	5
Program Description- Authorizing Legislation	6
Background	6
Project Management	9
Communication with FNS	9
Reports and Products	9
Data and Materials Property	10
Key Objectives	10
II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION	10
Allowable Costs	11
Cooperative Agreement Roles and Responsibilities	11
III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	12
Eligible Applicants	12
Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations	12
Other Eligibility Criteria	12
Pre-Award Screening Requirements	12
Acknowledgement of USDA Support	12
IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	13
Content and Form of Application Submission	13
Submission Date	16
Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov	16
How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov	17
Grants.gov Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission	17
V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION	18
Evaluation of Grant Application Criteria	18
1. Review Criteria	18
2. Evaluation Factors and Criteria	19
3. Review and Selection Process	20
VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION	20
Federal Award Notice	20
Administrative and National Policy Requirements	20
Confidentiality of an Application	20
Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information	20
Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality of the Review Process	21

Administrative Regulations.....	21
Code of Federal Regulations and Other Government Requirements	23
Reporting Requirements	24
Financial Reports.....	24
Performance Progress Report (PPR).....	24
VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS	24
VIII. OTHER INFORMATION	24
Debriefing Requests	24
APPENDIX	24
RFA Budget Narrative Checklist	24
Legal Organization Name:	26
FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only	29
USDA Non-Discrimination Statement	32

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides nutritious meals at no or low cost to children through the Child Nutrition (CN) programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). The school foodservice workforce employed approximately 339,000 workers in 2019,¹ and their labor is vital to implementing these important school-based CN programs. Recent legislation has emphasized the workforce's role in school meal programs' success in carrying out their mission of reducing childhood hunger. Notably, the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) expanded Professional Standards for the school foodservice workforce. "This provision is intended to ensure that school nutrition professionals that manage and operate the NSLP and SBP have adequate knowledge and training to meet Program requirements. Requiring proper qualifications to serve in the Child Nutrition Programs is expected to improve the quality of school meals, reduce errors, and enhance Program integrity."² However, FNS's understanding of school foodservice workers and their characteristics, including their demographics, educational attainment, employment histories, and opportunities for career growth, is limited.

Purpose

This Request for Applications (RFA) announces the availability of funds for a cooperative agreement. This funding opportunity will support research projects to better understand and generate information related to the school foodservice workforce focused on dimensions such as worker satisfaction, workforce experience, and training and development. Relevant research activities may include, but are not limited to providing information on career pathways for the school foodservice workforce, including training and skill-building opportunities, promotion potential, and tenure/retention within individual employers and the industry as a whole; identifying skills used on the job by role, including analysis of transferability of skills to other industries; identifying level of worker satisfaction and describe workplace conditions (perception and objective measures); and examining how any of the above vary across roles, demographics, school/school food authority (SFA) characteristics, and geography.

The USDA anticipates awarding up to \$1,500,000 in funding to one public or private academic or research institution. Funding will be provided to the selected Cooperator (herein after referred to as Grantee) for a period of performance that will run from fiscal year (FY) 2024 through FY 2027. Eligible applicants include public or private academic or research institutions.

The Grantee shall award over 50% of these funds as sub-grants through a competitive process. These sub-awards shall be made to public or private academic institutions, not-for-profit organizations, or State or Local government organizations for the purpose of conducting research activities that address issues related to the school foodservice workforce. These activities can include, but are not limited to, providing descriptive statistics to better understand the workforce, providing qualitative information about workforce experiences, identifying particular issues affecting the wellbeing of workers, and identifying the relationship between issues facing the workforce (e.g., worker turnover, skill-building opportunities) and other areas of concern for CN programs.

¹ Congressional Research Service. "The School Foodservice Workforce: Characteristics and Labor Market Outcomes." July 27, 2022. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47199>

² Food and Nutrition Service. "Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010." Federal Register, Vol. 80. No. 40, March 2, 2015. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-03-02/pdf/2015-04234.pdf>

In order to identify the most pressing and promising areas for research, prior to awarding sub-grants, the Grantee will design and carry out listening sessions with a variety of CN program stakeholders and experts (i.e., school food service professionals, State agency staff, academics, community organizations). The Grantee will also develop and complete a public-facing report summarizing the project's conclusions and providing an overview of funded sub-grantee projects, the outcomes of all sub-grantee projects, and any overarching findings. The Grantee will document findings from the listening sessions in this or another publicly available report. The Grantee shall also be responsible for providing and maintaining public access to data generated by the sub-grantee projects.

Program Description- Authorizing Legislation

The legislative authority to issue this award is contained at Section 6 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 USC 1755(a)(3), which authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to "carry out surveys and studies of requirements for food service programs in furtherance of the purposes expressed in section 2 of this Act and section 2 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773 and 1776). Section 2 of the Child Nutrition Act directs USDA to assist States to "meet more effectively the nutritional needs of our children."

The research funded under this cooperative agreement will examine topics related to school food service workforce overall satisfaction, including access to training and development, workplace conditions, job satisfaction and morale, and how those workplace experiences impact operation of school meal programs. The school nutrition workforce is instrumental in preparing and serving healthy, nutritious meals to all children and this research can help both the Agency and States better understand the needs of the school nutrition workforce. This is a one-time funding opportunity.

Background

Through its school-based CN programs, USDA FNS collaborates with State and local governments and Indian Tribal Organizations to foster nutrition security for children by providing consistent access to healthful meals and nutrition education at school. These programs include:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The NSLP is a federally assisted meal program operating in nearly 100,000 public and not-for-profit private schools and residential childcare institutions. FNS administers the program at the Federal level. At the State level, the NSLP is usually administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with school food authorities (SFAs). School districts that participate in the NSLP receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from USDA for each meal they serve. In 2019, almost 30 million children received lunch at school each day, and about 74% of those lunches were provided for free or at a reduced price.
- School Breakfast Program (SBP): The SBP is a federally-assisted meal program that operates in over 90,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. In 2019, nearly 15 million children received a school breakfast each day, and about 85 percent of these meals were served to children certified for free or reduced-price meals.
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): The FFVP provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. The fresh fruits and vegetables are provided separately from the lunch or breakfast meal, in one or more areas of the school. The goal of FFVP is to improve children's overall diet and create healthier eating habits to impact their present and future health.

USDA FNS is interested in gaining a better understanding of the workers employed by these programs and their experiences in the workplace. For the purposes of this funding opportunity, the "school foodservice workforce" is defined as including staff working in SFAs or in school cafeterias and kitchens to operate the NSLP, SBP, and/or FFVP. This encompasses cafeteria workers (such as food

servers and cashiers), cooks and food preparation staff (who may work in cafeterias, in central kitchens, etc.), cafeteria and kitchen managers, and SFA-level staff (e.g., SFA Director, procurement specialists). These workers can be hired directly by an SFA or indirectly by way of a food service management company (FSMC) or third-party employment agency. For this opportunity, the school foodservice workforce does not include Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI) workers or those involved in earlier stages of food production, such as workers employed by school food suppliers and manufacturers.

Examples of potential priority areas of interest for sub-grantee research fitting broadly into one or more of the topics listed above may include, but are not limited to:

- Describing variation in worker satisfaction by SFA characteristics and school characteristics (grade level, size, universal free (special provision/State program to offer all students meals at no charge) status, public/private/charter, urban/rural/suburban, percent participating in NSLP, other CN programs offered, etc.)
- Exploring employment during months or time periods school is not in session, including through other FNS CN programs that do operate in those months or time periods, like the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)/Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Program
- Investigating implications of workforce (in)stability on program operations, as well as successful approaches for hiring and retaining staff
- Examining the effectiveness of professional standards and whether their implementation led to any changes in practice, improvements in job performance, improvements in food or nutritional quality, or changes in program participation
- Identifying what skills tend to be used by workers in different contexts (e.g., in different roles, kitchen set-ups, and school food production styles) and analyzing the transferability of these skills outside of school foodservice
- Exploring career paths taken by staff, including occupations prior to entering CN workforce and common jobs among former employees
- Investigating opportunities for worker training by type of food service worker and by SFA and/or school characteristics, including costs of trainings to employers and/or individual employees
- Identifying the role of automation, cost-cutting, and staffing shortages on worker experience
- Identifying changes in the school foodservice workforce resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and recent labor market changes
- Investigating the relationship of more labor-intensive food preparation operations (e.g., cooking raw or minimally processed ingredients, preparing fresh produce) to worker satisfaction

FNS plans to award funding to one public or private academic or research institution to select and support research projects related to the school food workforce. The Grantee shall work cooperatively with FNS to:

- 1) **Design and conduct listening sessions with CN stakeholders to determine priority areas of research and any other relevant considerations for sub-grant awards.** These listening sessions should include CN stakeholders such as school food service professionals, State agency staff, academics, and community organizations. FNS anticipates 3-5 listening sessions; however, applicants shall propose their target number, which should not exceed 5. The Grantee shall prepare for public dissemination, including on the FNS website, a summary of the process to conduct these listening sessions, their content, and important takeaways.
- 2) **Develop and manage a competitive sub-grant award process to fund public or private not-for-profit, academic, or government organizations to conduct research on the school**

foodservice workforce in CN programs. The Grantee shall propose and justify a list of priority research areas for the sub- grants based on FNS priorities and the stakeholder listening sessions. The Grantee will select, award, and monitor the sub-grantee’s research projects.

- a) **The Grantee will develop a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process.** The Grantee’s process shall include developing a written RFP; establishing and following clear evaluation criteria; and widely publicizing the opportunity among a diverse group of potential applicants. The written RFP will describe the opportunity, explain eligibility for the sub-grants, and outline evaluation criteria for the award. FNS will review and discuss the RFP with the Grantee.

Priority should be given to sub-grantees who come from and/or show experience working with communities that are overrepresented in the school foodservice workforce.³ The sub-grant award process shall also consider the sub-grantee’s use of methods to facilitate an equitable research process (e.g., collaboration with participating communities) and minimize potential costs to individuals and communities participating in the research. The RFP shall require that, at a minimum, proposals include the following:

- A description of the research project and how it fits the funding opportunity and any priority areas of interest;
- Past experience working with CN programs or other nutrition assistance efforts;
- Documentation of support from any program operators and/or other partners with whom the sub-grantee plans to work;
- A description of the elements of the research design and/or processes that facilitate an equitable approach to research and minimization of costs to participants; and
- Documentation of procedures used to maintain the quality and integrity of all data and analyses.

- b) **Prior to selection of sub-grantees, the Grantee will submit to FNS the proposals and summaries of all proposals submitted by those applying for sub-grants and discuss the proposals with FNS.** At a minimum, the summaries shall include the name of the applicant, requested and suggested award amount, and a brief description of the proposed project. FNS will approve final selection decisions for the subgrants.
- c) After sub-grantees are selected, the Grantee will submit updated summaries of selected sub-grantee projects for publication on FNS’s website.
- d) After award of sub-grants, the Grantee will administer funding, monitor progress, and report on research projects to FNS. This may include sharing activities accomplished, obstacles encountered, and preliminary findings. It shall also include completing all reports required by FNS.

- 3) **Disseminate findings from the sub-grant projects broadly among CN stakeholders.** The Grantee shall prepare a public-facing report or set of reports, outlined on page 6, describing the sub-grantee projects; findings from each project as well as any cross-cutting findings; and a discussion of strengths, limitations, and possible next steps in research and dissemination. The report(s) may also include the summary of the CN stakeholder listening sessions. The Grantee shall share these findings among CN stakeholders including program operators and administrators, community organization partners, policymakers at all levels, and researchers. The Grantee shall also coordinate an opportunity for FNS staff to hear directly from grantees, and for grantees to hear from each other, about the findings of their projects. FNS also encourages the Grantee to present research findings at academic and professional conferences.

³ See Table 5 (pages 20-21) in the Congressional Research Service’s report on the School Foodservice Workforce for data on demographic groups that are overrepresented in the Elementary and Secondary Public School Foodservice compared to other occupations and sectors. Congressional Research Service. “The School Foodservice Workforce: Characteristics and Labor Market Outcomes.” July 27, 2022. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47199>

The Grantee must also compile and make publicly available all data collected and analyzed by sub-grantees, in a form accessible to other researchers (e.g., downloadable file on a Grantee website), unless otherwise approved by FNS. FNS will provide direction on how the Grantee will make this information available.

Project Management

Communication with FNS

The Grantee shall schedule and plan a virtual kickoff meeting within one month from date of award to discuss the objectives of the cooperative agreement, plan for communication moving forward, and address any Grantee questions. The Grantee shall also schedule and plan a virtual close out meeting near the conclusion of the project to present findings and exchange information on lessons learned. The Grantee, along with sub-grantees, shall provide a formal presentation to FNS at that time.

Over the course of the project, FNS and the Grantee shall meet regularly, on a schedule to be jointly determined (per the needs of the project, but no less frequently than quarterly). In these meetings, the Grantee shall provide an overview of the activities conducted since the last meeting, major accomplishments, deviations from the proposed plan and/or other challenges encountered, solutions developed and lessons learned, sub-grantee progress and preliminary findings, assistance needed from FNS on technical issues, and major planned activities for the next quarter. Sub-grantees may attend these meetings, and FNS may request sub-grantee attendance. The Grantee shall provide FNS with an agenda 3 business days prior to each call. Should a major issue arise between meetings, the Grantee shall contact the FNS Program Officers immediately.

Reports and Products

All documents intended for public dissemination (e.g., reports, peer-reviewed articles) generated by efforts funded through this cooperative agreement must be reviewed and approved by FNS before general distribution or submission to peer review for publication in scientific journals. This includes documents not explicitly required by the cooperative agreement. FNS's review will be largely consultative in nature, as opposed to intending to specify changes required for distribution or submission. Project timelines should factor in FNS review of reports and products, with 3 weeks for items 30 pages or less and 6 weeks for items greater than 30 pages in length. The Grantee shall provide FNS with an electronic copy of all reports, articles and/or other dissemination materials (e.g., outreach materials and documents, PowerPoint slides) resulting from this grant and sub-grant activity at the time of submission for publication (if applicable) and in final form when published.

Reports to be published by FNS on the USDA webpage require FNS review and clearance. All materials that will be published on FNS's website must be Section 508-compliant. Please see <http://www.section508.gov/> for more information. The Grantee is responsible for delivering compliant documents to FNS for website publication.

Unless otherwise advised by the Agency, the Recipient will acknowledge the support of USDA FNS whenever publicizing the work under this grant. To this end, the Grantee must include in any publication resulting from work performed under this grant an acknowledgment in substantially the form set below. "This material is based upon work that is supported by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government."

Data and Materials Property

All data, documents, communications, and other materials developed and used by the Grantee in the performance of this cooperative agreement shall be maintained by the Grantee for a period of three years from the date of final payment or close-out of the grant, whichever comes last, under this agreement or for such further period as may be necessary to resolve any matters which may be pending. Within one year of conclusion of data collection, the Grantee must also compile and make publicly available for no fewer than five years all data collected and analyzed by sub-grantees, in a form accessible to other researchers (e.g., downloadable file on a Grantee website), unless otherwise approved by FNS. The Grantee shall also provide to FNS data files including raw data, analytic code, output files, codebooks and other applicable documentation sufficient for FNS to replicate the analyses used in any Grantee or sub-grantee reports, publications, or presentations.

The Grantee should have in place appropriate controls to ensure compliance with relevant privacy and confidentiality standards (see, e.g., section below on personally identifiable information) and to ensure sub-grantee compliance with the same. The Grantee should also have in place appropriate controls and procedures to maintain the quality and security of any data collected and ensure the sub-grantees do the same.

FNS reserves the right to utilize, disseminate, or share any deliverables produced with funding under this grant project in accordance with 2 CFR part 200 (including, but not limited to, tools developed by sub-grantees using grant funds).

Key Objectives

Below is a list of the Program Objectives. As noted in the section below, within “Activities/Indicators Tracker”, proposed activities should be clearly aligned to these Objectives and their associated Activities and Indicators.

#	Objectives
1	Design and conduct listening sessions with CN stakeholders to determine priority areas of research and any other relevant considerations for sub-grant awards.
2	Develop and manage a competitive sub-grant award process to fund public or private not-for-profit or academic organizations to conduct research on equitable access in CN programs.
3	Disseminate findings from the sub-grant projects broadly among CN stakeholders.

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

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

- Total amount of funding expected to award: \$1,500,000
- Anticipated number of awards: 1
- Anticipated award announcement date: December 8, 2023
- Expected amounts of individual Federal awards: \$1,500,000
- Anticipated start dates and period of performance: March 2024-March 2027
- Anticipated amounts and/or numbers of individual awards: 1
- Estimated funding per award: \$1,500,000
- Application due date: February 9, 2024

Please note:

1. Grant awards are subject to the availability of funding and/or appropriations of funds.
2. FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants this year or the subsequent fiscal year, should additional funds become available.

Allowable Costs

This cooperative agreement is a one-time funding opportunity that will be awarded on a competitive basis, subject to the availability of federal funds. Approximately \$1,500,000 is available for funding this opportunity, the majority of which shall be awarded through a competitive, sub-grant process to academic, not-for-profit, or government organizations for research projects examining equitable access within CN programs. FNS will accept one application package per applicant. This award is contingent upon the availability and apportionment of Federal funding.

Among other costs, budgets may include expenses related to personnel, contractors, equipment and supplies, food, meeting expenses, travel, and trainings.

Cooperative Agreement Roles and Responsibilities

This grant will be awarded in the form of a cooperative agreement. This agreement is a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Federal government and the Grantee. Roles and responsibilities of FNS and the grantee are as follows:

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

At FNS discretion, FNS involvement with the Grantee may include, but is not limited to:

- Communicating regularly with the Grantee regarding their plans to meet this RFA's requirement
- Reviewing and approving the final RFP for the sub-grantee competition
- Providing comments on a Grantee-provided summary of all applications for the sub-grants
- Approving the final list of sub-grant awards
- Reviewing near-final reports, datasets, and articles generated by efforts funded through this cooperative agreement before general distribution or submission to peer review for publication in scientific journals.

Grantee. The Grantee has overall responsibility for planning, implementation, and operations of the project. The Grantee shall:

- Carry out all activities necessary to fulfill the items as described in the Activities section above
- Keep FNS informed on project progress and major issues or concerns
- Submit timely progress reports and financial reports throughout the award period and submit a final progress report and a final financial report
- Coordinate and attend an initial kickoff meeting, progress meetings, and a close-out meeting via teleconference
- Provide FNS with an opportunity to review near-final reports, datasets, and articles generated by efforts funded through this cooperative agreement prior to dissemination or submission to journals
- Make publicly available all data collected under efforts funded through this cooperative agreement within 12 months of the conclusion of data collection for a period of no fewer than 5 years

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

This Request for Applications (RFA) is open to all accredited institutions of higher education (colleges/universities), nonprofit research entities and other nonprofit organizations with documented experience in public health research and communications. Nonprofit organizations must have documented 501(c)(3) status. These are requirements for the selected recipient of the cooperative agreement, not any potential sub-grantees.

FNS is committed to enhancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of our programs and encourages individuals, institutions, and organizations from underserved communities to apply for funding opportunities as grant or subgrant recipients.

Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations

There are no cost sharing or matching requirements for this program.

Other Eligibility Criteria

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

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.
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is a number that is used by the Federal government to better identify related organizations that are receiving funding under grants and cooperative agreements; *and*
- 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.

1. 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. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.” Grantees should follow the USDA Visual Standards Guide when using the USDA logo.
2. Grant recipients *may* be asked to host USDA officials for a site visit during the course of their grant award. All costs associated with the site visit will be paid for by USDA and are not expected to be included in grant budgets.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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 12-point font. The project description with relevant information should be captured on no more than 25 pages. This page count does not include the cover sheet, table of contents, resumes, letter of commitment(s), endorsement letter(s), budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms but applicants should make an effort to ensure only necessary information is included in the application package. All pages, excluding the form pages, must be numbered.

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.
- Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, or certification will not be considered.
- Applications missing a written proposal or budget narrative will not be considered.
- 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.
- This award is contingent upon the availability and apportionment of Federal funding.

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

The Table of Contents should include relevant sections, subsections and associated page numbers.

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.

The project narrative should include (but is not limited to) the below sections and information. Please use these section headings in the project narrative and number accordingly:

1. Introduction/Background: Provide an overview of the plan for the project and major qualifications. Demonstrate understanding of the project requirements and considerations.
2. Listening Session: Describe a plan to design and conduct stakeholder listening sessions, including major considerations. Include evidence of any prior experience conducting similar sessions or relevant expertise (e.g., experience working with CN programs, participants, or stakeholders) to inform this activity. Include a proposed target number of stakeholder listening sessions and type and number of participants in each.
3. RFP Administration: Describe a plan to administer a competitive RFP process, including development of the solicitation, promotion of the solicitation among eligible applicants, and evaluation criteria for received proposals. Include the target number and scale of grants and describe plans to work with sub-grantees to fulfill the requirements of this project. Describe a plan to monitor and report on sub-grantee progress. Include evidence of any experience or expertise working with researchers or others representing underserved communities.
4. Dissemination: Describe plans for disseminating findings from this grant, including plans to write a summary report and to make project findings accessible to various stakeholders. Include plans for compiling and maintaining data and other project materials to ensure public accessibility.
5. Management: Provide a clear description of the activities to be undertaken to manage the project to ensure that project activities are completed on time, within budget, and with quality results. Provide a clear description of how funds will be administered and distributed to sub-awardees. Describe how quality assurance, data security and privacy controls, recordkeeping, and accounting activities will be executed.
6. Staffing: Describe the organizational structure and identify the key personnel who will manage the project. Describe roles and responsibilities of these individuals, as well as their relevant qualifications, expertise, and experience, and a level of effort specified for specific staff proposed. Explain contingency plans for staff turnover.
7. Timeline: Include a timeline with specific activities that will contribute to accomplishing the project objectives.
8. Resumes/CVs: To assist reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, include a resume or curriculum vitae of the key personnel expected to work on the project.

Activities/Indicators Tracker

Proposed Activities and indicators measuring success must be mapped to Program Objectives (as described in Section I – 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 #	1
Activity	Listening sessions
Indicator(s)	Number of sessions held
Activity	Listening sessions
Indicator(s)	Number of attendees at each session

Objective #	
Activity	
Indicator(s)	

Objective #	
Activity	
Indicator(s)	

Application Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. Budget narrative project totals must match SF-424A, sections A and B. The narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct cost. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement. All non-profit organizations must include their 501(c)(3) determination letter issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). **All funding requests must be in whole dollars.**

Indirect Cost Rate

A current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), negotiated with a Federal negotiating 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. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "none requested" should be stated in the budget narrative. For questions related to the indirect cost rate, please work with the Grant Officer as noted in Section VII of this RFA.

Required Grant Application Forms

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

Submission Date

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

- Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Mailed, e-mailed or hand-delivered application packages will not be accepted. For further instructions, go [here](#).
- 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.
- This award is contingent upon the availability and apportionment of Federal funding.

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**. Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to Grants.gov should contact the Support Center at Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support 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 call the Grants.gov Support Center and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist the Center with tracking your issue and understanding background information on the issue. FNS will evaluate all submission issues encountered by applicants on a case-by-case basis.

Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov

Applicants must register with Grants.gov, Dun and Bradstreet and Sam.gov in order to submit an application to FNS via Grants.gov, as required. FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration process at least **four weeks before the due date**.

In order to submit an application, you must:

1. Obtain a UEI number
 - Existing entities can find their UEI by following the steps here: https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0041254. New entities can get their UEI at SAM.gov and, if required, complete an entity registration.

NOTE: On and after April 4, 2022, entities can register in in SAM.gov and will be assigned their Unique Entity ID (SAM) within SAM.gov. They will no longer obtain or use a UEI (DUNS) for entity registration or reporting. For additional information on the UEI process, please visit: <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>

2. Register in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov)
 - SAM.gov combines Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance into one system. For additional information regarding SAM.gov, see the following link: <http://www.sam.gov/SAM>
 - Must have your organization's DUNS, entity's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on last tax return). **It may take 3-5 business days to register in SAM.gov;** however, in some instances the SAM process to complete the migration of permissions and/or

the renewal of the entity record will require **5-7 days or more**.

- All applicants must have current SAM status at the time of application submission and throughout the duration of a Federal Award in accordance with two CFR Part 25.
- We strongly encourage applicants to begin the process **at least 3 weeks** before the due date of the grant solicitation.

3. Create a Grants.gov Account:

The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI to complete this process. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>

4. Authorize Grants.gov Roles:

After creating an account on Grants.gov, the E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) receives an email notifying them of the registration and request for roles. The E-Biz POC will need to go to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. An approved Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) must complete and submit the application online at Grants.gov. To learn more about the E-Biz POC role and other profile roles, please visit:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

5. Track Role Status:

To track your role request, please visit

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

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

How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov

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

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

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

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

For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, please contact the Grant Officer noted in the [Agency Contacts](#) (Section VII) of this RFA.

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 [here](#). Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by

Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When FNS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for 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.

Additional Information on Grants.gov and the Registration Process:

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 (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 (examples: & – * % / # ' -). This includes periods (.) and spacing followed by a dash in the file. To separate words in naming a file, use underscore, as in the following example: Attached_File.pdf.

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.

Additional information and applicant resources are available at:

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

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Evaluation of Grant Application Criteria

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

2. Evaluation Factors and Criteria

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

Approach (40 points)

- Demonstrates understanding of FNS requirements and goals
- Demonstrates capacity and commitment to meet objectives in a high-quality manner
- Articulates a clear and feasible plan to design and conduct listening sessions that will provide useful and actionable information
- Incorporates appropriate considerations into plan for designing and conducting listening sessions
- Articulates a clear and feasible plan to recruit and monitor sub-grantees with relevant and high-value research projects and representing with underserved communities
- Demonstrates expertise and experience to produce a high-quality final report summarizing project findings
- Articulates a clear and feasible plan to broadly disseminate findings among a variety of stakeholders and maintain publicly accessible data and other project materials
- Provides a reasonable and clearly described timeline for accomplishing project objectives
- Demonstrates capacity and commitment to high-quality, professional communication through clear writing style and lack of typographical, grammatical, and formatting errors

Management (20 Points)

- Articulates a clear and reasonable plan to ensure high-quality products and other outcomes and to keep the project on time and within budget
- Demonstrates effective internal controls of funds provided to sub-grantees to ensure funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail
- Demonstrates effective internal controls related to data security and privacy and capacity to meet necessary standards

Staffing (20 Points)

- Clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of key personnel and other partners and staff involved in the proposed project
- Clearly documents and provides evidence to show that key personnel have necessary and relevant education, skills, and experience for their proposed roles on the project
- Provides sufficient documentation that the time commitment of key personnel is appropriate for their project roles and feasible given other responsibilities
- Articulates a clear plan for managing personnel associated with the project and for addressing any contingencies such as loss of key personnel

Budget (20 points)

- Requests an amount appropriate for the scope of the project
- Proposes costs that are reasonable, necessary, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives
- Includes a line-item description for every allowable cost and shows how it supports the project goals
- Provides complete budget calculations and documentation to show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated
- Provides a clear justification for, and, to the extent possible, maximizes the amount allocated for subgrantees

- If applicable, clearly identifies a bona fide need to justify the cost for any subcontractor or consultant expenses

Total Possible Points = 100

3. Review and Selection Process

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

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

VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

Applicants submitting applications in response to this RFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII

and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. All federal and non-federal employees (e.g., contractors, affiliates, or partners) working for or on behalf of FNS are required to acknowledge understanding of their responsibilities and accountability for using and protecting FNS PII in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974; Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-06-15, *Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information*; M-06-16, *Protection of Sensitive Agency Information*; M-07-16, *Safeguarding Against and Responding to the Breach of Personally Identifiable Information*; and the NIST Special Publication (SP) 800-122, *Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information*.

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

Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality of the Review Process

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

Administrative Regulations

Federal Tax Liabilities Restrictions

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

Felony Crime Conviction Restrictions

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

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

A recipient chosen for an award shall comply with the non-procurement debarment and suspension common rule implementing Executive Orders (E.O.) 12549 and 12669, "Debarment and Suspension," codified at 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417. This common rule restricts sub-awards and contracts

with certain parties that are debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs or activities. The approved grant recipient will be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules prior to approving a sub-grant award by checking the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Effective October 1, 2010, all grant applicants must obtain a universal identifier for Federal financial assistance. Active grant recipients and their direct sub-recipients of a sub-grant award also must obtain a UEI number.

The grant recipient must also register its UEI number in SAM.gov. If you were registered in the CCR, your company's information should be in SAM and you will need to set up a SAM account. To register in SAM you will need your entity's UEI and your entity's Tax ID Number (TIN) and taxpayer name (as it appears on your last tax return). Registration should take **3-5 days**. If you do not receive confirmation that your SAM registration is complete, please contact SAM.gov 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) 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.

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 Freedom of Information (FOIA) process, please contact the FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at FOIA@usda.gov.

Privacy Policy

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

- 1) 2 CFR Part 25: "Universal Identifier and System for Award Management"
- 2) 2 CFR Part 170: "Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information"
- 3) 2 CFR Part 175: "Award Term for Trafficking in Persons"
- 4) 2 CFR Part 180: "OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)"
- 5) 2 CFR Part 200: "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards"
- 6) 2 CFR Part 400: USDA's implementing regulation of 2 CFR Part 200 "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards"
- 7) 2 CFR Part 415: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations"
- 8) 2 CFR Part 416: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments"
- 9) 2 CFR Part 417: USDA "Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension"
- 10) 2 CFR Part 418 USDA "New Restrictions on Lobbying"
- 11) 2 CFR Part 421: USDA "Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)"
- 12) 7 CRR Part 16: "Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations"
- 13) 41 U.S.C. Section 22 "Interest of Member of Congress"
- 14) 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 the [Agency Contacts](#) (Section VII) of this RFA.

Reporting Requirements

Financial Reports

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425 (Financial Status 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 certification and access to FPRS. For additional information on FPRS, visit: www.USDA.gov.

Performance Progress Report (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. 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. For reference, sample of the PPR form can be found in the Appendix. **Please note:** the FNS-908 PPR form specific to this opportunity will be sent to grantees at the time of award. Use of the FNS-908 PPR form for progress reports is required.

VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

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

Benjamin Snyder
Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
1320 Braddock Place, Suite 620
Alexandra, VA 22314
E-mail: benjamin.snyder@usda.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Debriefing Requests

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

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?		
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 an 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.		

PURPOSE

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

Please submit this questionnaire along with your application package.

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
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1.	Has your organization been audited within the last 5 fiscal years? <i>(If the answer is “Yes” and this report was issued under the Single Audit Act please note this in the box below marked “Additional Information” and if not issued under the “Single Audit Act”, please attach a copy or provide a link to the audit report in the Hyperlink space below).</i>	☐	☐
2.	If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a “Qualified Opinion” or an “Adverse Opinion”?	☐	☐
3.	If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a “Material Weakness” disclosed?	☐	☐
4.	If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a “Significant Deficiency” disclosed?	☐	☐
Hyperlink (if available):			
Additional information including expanding on responses in previous sections:			

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

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

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

Name of Authorized
Representative:
Phone Number:
Email:

FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only

The following pages contain screenshots of the PPR form that grantees are required to use for progress and final reports submitted to FNS. Upon award, a PPR form (Adobe PDF), customized for the specific FNS program, will be included in award packages.

FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only

Print	Submit by Email	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Food and Nutrition Service	OMB Number: 0584-0512 Expiration Date: 7/31/2022
PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT			Management Settings
Recommended File Name: FNS908_{Organization Name}_{Type of Report}_{Reporting Fiscal Year}_{Period}_{Original Revision}.pdf <i>Copy value then paste in Save As dialog when saving</i>			
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		2. Program Information:	
a. Organization Name:		Program Area:	
b. Street Address:		Federal Fiscal Year of Award:	
City: State: Zip:		Program:	
		Tag:	
3. Primary POC:		4. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN):	
a. First Name:	Last Name:	5. Type of Report (Select One):	
b. Title:		☒ Quarterly ☐ Semi-Annual ☐ Final	
c. Telephone (Area Code & Number):		Reporting Fiscal Year: Period:	
d. Email Address:		Original/Revision:	
6. Federal Grant Agreement Number:			
7. Additional POC (Optional)			
a. First Name:		b. Title:	
Last Name:			
c. Telephone (Area Code & Number):		d. Email Address:	
8. Report Submitted By:			
a. First Name:		b. Title:	
Last Name:			
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:			

FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only (Continued)

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):	

FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only (Continued)

Program Management Information (Continued)

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						
-	1			Target	Actual (Cumulative)	Comments			
Add Objective Remove Objective									

Page 4

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)

Page 3

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, audiotope, 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.