

**GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM**  
**Center for Employment & Economic Supports**

**April 1, 2014**

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**TO:** Subscribers

**SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION:** Commissioners, TA and SNAP Directors, Employment Coordinators

**FROM:** Phyllis Morris, Deputy Commissioner  
Center for Employment and Economic Supports

**SUBJECT:** FFY 2014 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Process and  
Technology Improvement Grants

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Immediately

**CONTACT PERSON:** Your OTDA SNAP Liaison, SNAP Bureau, 518-473-1469;  
Your OTDA Employment Services Advisor, or 518-486-6106, for SNAP E&T

The purpose of this GIS is to inform Social Services Districts (SSDs) that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued a grant competition to support efforts by State agencies and their community-based and faith-based partners to develop and implement:

- Simplified SNAP application and eligibility determination systems;
- Measures to improve access to SNAP benefits by eligible applicants; or
- Projects that lead to greater efficiencies and improve outcomes of Employment and Training (E&T) services.

As indicated in the attached Request for Applications (RFA), USDA is seeking diverse proposals that would make the entire SNAP process easier and more efficient for applicants and participants.

This year, USDA is particularly interested in funding projects that examine office processes and identify and implement efficiencies. These projects can include partnerships with vendors or contractors on business process re-engineering (BPR) techniques or train-the-trainer programs to achieve efficiencies. USDA is also interested in funding projects that use technology to achieve procedural changes that simplify administration of the SNAP or projects that lead to greater efficiencies and improved outcomes of E&T programs.

**SSDs are strongly encouraged to apply.** Proposals should focus on improving the quality and efficiency of operations and processes within the SNAP office. Specifically, the USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) are interested in initiatives that use new technologies or examine office processes in order to improve application processing timeliness for initial applications or re-certifications. In addition, FNS is also interested in proposals that aim to increase the effectiveness of employment and training (E&T) activities. According to the RFA, E&T projects could include, but are not necessarily limited to, improving job retention among participants, increase the number of

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components in a State E&T program and providing wrap around support services that link E&T participants to other community resources to ensure success. The RFA further states that FNS will also consider funding projects that apply BPR and new technology to the administration of the E&T program, including but not limited to, proposals that examine and implement new processes to connect work-ready SNAP participants with existing E&T activities and job placements, technology updates that improve the programs administration, or improving reporting measures to evaluate the effectiveness of E&T activities.

We encourage interested districts to carefully read the review criteria listed in the attached RFA. These criteria will guide FNS' evaluation of proposals and should be included in all applications.

Please note on page 6 of the RFA that **all applications will require a "letter of endorsement," from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Requests for letter of endorsement should be submitted to OTDA, along with a synopsis of your district's grant proposal, no later than close of business on Friday, April 25, 2014.**

To request a letter of support, please go to this link (<http://otda.ny.gov/legal/letter-request/>) and follow the procedures as directed.

**Applications for the grants are due to the USDA-FNS no later than 11:59 p.m. (EDT) on Thursday, May 22, 2014. Applications MUST be submitted electronically to the USDA-FNS through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).**

Several NYS districts have been awarded grants in the past. To review SNAP grant applications from counties previously awarded grant monies, please contact your OTDA SNAP liaison. Additional assistance in grant writing may be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/fundguide.html#grantwritingresources>
- <http://www.federalgrantswire.com/writing-a-federal-grant-proposal.html>

To learn more about finding and applying for other federal grant opportunities, please go to: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Attachment

**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 60 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.

## **Fiscal Year 2014**

**Fiscal Year 2014 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Process and Technology Improvement Grants**

# **Request For Applications**

**The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) is 10.580.**

**Requests for applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m. (EDT) on May 22, 2014.**

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## **AUTHORIZATION**

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, authorized the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to award \$5 million in grants to State agencies\*; public health or educational entities; or private nonprofit entities such as community-based or faith-based organizations, food banks, or other emergency feeding organizations, for projects aimed at simplifying the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application and eligibility determination systems or improving access to SNAP benefits by eligible households.

THIS SOLICITATION IS CONTINGENT UPON THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.

**\* Throughout this RFA the term “State agencies” refers to the agencies of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam that administer SNAP.**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this grant competition is to support efforts by State agencies and their community-based and faith-based partners to develop and implement:

- Simple SNAP application and eligibility determination systems; or
- Measures to improve access to SNAP benefits by eligible applicants.

This RFA seeks diverse proposals that would make the entire process easier and more efficient for applicants and participants.

Grant proposals should focus on improving the quality and efficiency of operations and processes within the SNAP office. Specifically, FNS is interested in initiatives that use new technologies or examine office processes in order to improve application processing timeliness for initial applications or re-certifications. In addition, FNS is also interested in proposals that aim to increase the effectiveness of employment and training (E&T) activities.

We encourage potential applicants to carefully read the five review criteria listed in the RFA. These criteria outline the qualities FNS expects successful proposals to have; they will also guide the reviewers' evaluation of proposals.

## **WHO MAY APPLY**

The entities eligible to receive grants under this competition are:

- The 53 State agencies that administer the SNAP<sup>1</sup>;
- State or local governments<sup>1</sup>;
- Agencies providing health or welfare services<sup>2</sup>;
- Public health or educational entities<sup>2</sup>; and

- Private non-profit entities<sup>2</sup> such as community-based or faith-based organizations, food banks, or other emergency feeding organizations.

<sup>1</sup> **State agencies and State and local governments should have the necessary approvals of state officials (such as councils or legislatures) of funding prior to submitting the application. Applicants should also acknowledge in their application that all necessary approvals for funding have been obtained.**

<sup>2</sup> **Non-profit organizations are required to submit a copy of the IRS Determination Letter, form 501(c)(3) or proof of application for exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, a list of their Board of Directors if applicable, and their most recent audited financial statements signed by the Treasurer or the Treasurer of the board. Educational entities are also required to submit their most recent financial statements signed by the Treasurer or Treasurer of the board. Applications submitted without these will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from consideration. All corporations, including non-profit corporations are required to complete the attached representation regarding felony convictions and tax delinquency.**

## **Fiscal Year 2014 Priorities**

The grant competition described in this RFA specifically encourages applicants respond to the priorities described below.

### **1. Workflow Analysis and Process Management**

With rising caseloads, low staffing levels and diminished funding, State agencies need to examine office processes and identify and implement efficiencies to meet the increased demands of administering SNAP. FNS is interested in funding projects that **examine office processes and identify and implement efficiencies**, for example, through specialization of tasks, caseload sharing, or other such initiatives. These projects can include partnerships with vendors or contractors on business process re-engineering (BPR) techniques or train-the-trainer programs to achieve efficiencies. FNS also encourages projects with partnerships with private non-profit organizations (such as food banks or other non-profits) to review and re-engineer SNAP business processes. FNS will fund the costs of conducting a BPR process analysis on local office procedures as well as the costs of implementing efficiencies that are identified through a BPR process. Using BPR, State agencies have identified and implemented approaches to achieve office efficiencies such as: creating a two-track triage team for low-risk and higher-risk applications; forming paperwork and processing teams or maintenance teams for handling case re-certifications and changes; using specialized case workers, who focus on complicated policy areas, such as immigration; establishing specialized units to focus exclusively on verifying documents so caseworkers have time for interviews and customers can get in and out of the office quickly. States have contracted with vendors/contractors for document verification using data matching that provide faster and more complete verification information. For this priority, the proposal should focus on one or more local offices as opposed to the State agency.

### **2. Technology Improvements**

In response to today's challenges, FNS supports technological strategies that can improve client services and save States valuable time and money. To that end, the FNS is interested in funding projects that use

technology to achieve procedural changes (such as, electronic application filing, document imaging, telephone interviews, web-based access to case status information) to simplify the enrollment process, facilitate reporting requirements and improve client retention. We invite proposals that allow workers to spend less time on data entry, reduce the number of telephone calls (especially about simple matters such as case status), or result in fewer documents lost (for example through document imaging). Technology can reach populations that have difficulty visiting the local offices and thereby improve access. For example, some States have service centers or kiosks with computers and internet access so clients can apply for benefits or check the status of their applications if they do not have access to a personal computer. This may lead to increased access because State agencies can identify potentially eligible participants and decrease the amount of staff time necessary for each case. Other technological strategies include, but are not limited to: increased phone capacities, call centers, real-time data access services, and online-case access/status for clients. Implementation of technological strategies can be a result of a BPR process as described above.

### **3. Employment and Training**

SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) services help move work-ready adults into employment, offer re-training opportunities to the recently unemployed, and help participants with low education or literacy levels achieve milestones that move them closer toward economic independence. From its conception, the purpose of the E&T Program has been to help SNAP households gain skills, training, work, or experience that will increase self-sufficiency. FNS is interested in funding projects that lead to greater efficiencies and improved outcomes of E&T programs. These could include, but are not limited to, improving job retention among participants, increasing the number of components in a State E&T program and providing wrap around support services that link E&T participants to other community resources to ensure success. In addition, FNS will also consider funding projects that apply BPR and new technology to the administration of the E&T program. These could include, but are not limited to, proposals that examine and implement new processes to connect work-ready SNAP participants with existing E&T activities and job placements, technology updates that improve the programs administration, or improving reporting measures to evaluate the effectiveness of E&T activities.

#### **Number of Applications**

As mentioned above, FNS has designed this grant competition to give State agencies control over the submission of applications involving their operations via the mechanism of “Letters of Commitment or Endorsement.” If State agencies submit more than one application each, or enter into more than one partnership each, FNS encourages them to make explicit in each application its relationship to any others. State agencies that submit more than one application should consider carefully the allocation of time stated in each application. State agencies with more than one partner organization may wish to consider submitting a single application designed to make sub-grants to the partner organizations. Proposals forwarded by any given State agency should request funding for distinct, non-overlapping activities.

#### **Letters of Commitment or Endorsement**

FNS recognizes that the grant proposals responding to this RFA will directly affect State agency operations. Therefore, if the grant proposal is from an entity other than a State agency, it must show that a State agency strongly endorses or is intimately involved in the proposed project in order to be considered.

Please refer to the two types of letters described below to determine which is appropriate to submit with the proposal. Please note that State agencies are able to submit an application on their own as well as partner with another organization. Please refer to the section above on Number of Applications. **Applications submitted without a letter of commitment or a letter of endorsement will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from consideration.** FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received. Therefore, applicants must include the letter of commitment or letter of endorsement with their application package to be considered for funding. Such letters may be addressed to the FNS Grant Officer.

**A Letter of Commitment** is required if the grant proposal is from a State agency working in partnership with another organization(s). The letter(s) of commitment must describe:

- the organization's role in the project,
- the amount of time it intends to commit to the project and an attestation that it will cooperate with the grant applicant in implementing the project, and
- must be provided on the respective organization's letter head and be signed by an authorizing individual.

**A Letter of Endorsement** is required if an applicant is not partnering with a State agency. The State agency's letter of endorsement must:

- explain that the State agency is aware of the projected impact on its system and is supportive of the proposed project, and
- be on the respective State agency's letterhead and be signed by an authorizing official.

## **FUNDING AND DURATION**

Up to \$5 million is available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 for the SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants. FNS will award the grants through a competitive process. FNS plans to announce the grant awards to the selected grantees no later than September 30, 2014. Grantees will be allowed to use the grant funds for the duration of the project period. The grants will be funded for the period September 30, 2014 through August 31, 2017. The number of grants awarded varies from year to year and could be larger or smaller depending on the quality and nature of the grants received. FNS reminds applicants that the submission of a proposal does not guarantee funding. Funding for approved grants will be provided through the Grant Award/Letter of Credit process, in the same manner as other funds, upon receipt of a properly executed Grant Agreement and subject to the availability of funding. All Program Process and Technology Improvement Grant funds must be obligated and all activities under the Grant must be completed by August 31, 2017.

If the activities funded under this grant are part of a larger eligibility system project with total projected costs exceeding \$5 million, an Advance Planning Document (APD) must be submitted and approved prior to the expenditure of these grant funds. Guidance on the APD process can be found at [www.fns.usda.gov/apd/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/apd/). Applicants also need to be reminded that if the proposed project funded with this grant benefits other programs in addition to SNAP then the costs must be allocated appropriately between all of the benefiting programs. **This grant funding can only be used for SNAP's share of the costs.**



## USES OF FUNDS

### Allowable Uses of Funds

Funds from this RFA are for new projects and shall not be used for the ongoing cost of carrying out an existing project. Also, FNS reserves the right to request information on all contractual awards and costs after the award of the grantee's contract. Furthermore, projects predicated on waiving SNAP regulations are not allowable and will not be considered for funding. However, if during the grant period, a State agency determines a waiver is needed, the State may apply for one but there is no guarantee FNS will approve the waiver.

Program Process and Technology Improvement Grants do not support projects that devote more than 25 percent of the requested grant funds to outreach activities, such as informational materials, pure application assistance, screening/pre-qualifying applicants - or whose purpose is to attract or recruit SNAP applicants.

## APPLICATION REVIEW AND GRANT AWARD PROCESS

### Screening and Review Process

FNS will screen all applications that meet the published deadline for submission to ensure their completeness and conformity to the requirements of this announcement. **Application packages are required to be complete upon submission. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received under any circumstances.** Applications that are fully responsive to the initial screening requirements will be reviewed competitively and scored based upon the five evaluation criteria and weights listed below. One or more review panels may be comprised of United States Department of Agriculture staff, other federal agency staff, and other individuals committed to furthering the goals of the SNAP. The review panel will evaluate each grant application on how well it addresses each grant evaluation criteria. The resulting scores will provide a ranking of applications according to technical merit for use by selecting official.

#### Technical Evaluation Criteria and Weights

##### 1. Soundness or Merit of Project Design (40 points)

*Problem analysis:* The proposal clearly describes the problem to be solved and provides evidence that the proposed approach is well-suited to solve the identified issue.

##### **Impact:**

- The proposal demonstrates a direct effect on the SNAP process and provides evidence that the changes would benefit the applicant/recipient.
- It shows a clear progression from idea to practice in a State agency or County office.
- It describes the impact the project is expected to make. Impact can be described in terms of the degree of improvement applicants/participants are expected to experience while going through the application/certification process, the number of participants finding employment as a result of participating in E&T activities, the percentage of a State agency's or County office's participant caseload that is expected to benefit, or the size of positive impact on a specific population such as elderly applicants.

**Quality:** The proposal shows thought, analysis, clarity, and the use of relevant facts and knowledge.

**Sustainability:** The proposal shows that the project has the potential to be transferred successfully to other State agencies or statewide and that the project has the potential to be sustained after the grant period ends.

**Letters of Commitment or Endorsement:** The application includes letters of commitment or endorsement that clearly outline either the State's endorsement or partnership by following the guidelines found on page 6 of this RFA.

**Innovation:** The application proposes innovative development of new or revised State or County SNAP application processing or certification systems, or portions thereof.

**Feasibility:** The application proposes projects that are capable of being accomplished and likely to be implemented.

## 2. Budget Appropriateness and Economic Efficiency (25 points)

**Budget:** The proposal includes:

- A line item budget **See Attachment C - Application Package Checklist to assure each category is addressed in the budget.**
- A narrative that demonstrates how funds will be spent, by whom and for what purpose
- The narrative should provide enough detail for reviewers to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the goals and objectives of the project. **There should be adequate justification for budget costs based on current industry costs/standards. Information on costs should be obtained from applicable organizations or from online sources.**
- Additionally, a copy of the approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be attached if indirect costs are shown as a budget expense to the project.
- If applicable, the budget must show how the costs are allocated among the benefiting programs and demonstrate that this grant is only going to fund SNAP's share.
- If desired, a tiered budget and narrative that describes adjustments the applicant would make if it were awarded funding at different levels (only the primary budget will be analyzed against this criterion).

**Efficiency:** The proposal is cost effective – it demonstrates that the anticipated results are commensurate with the cost of the project.

**Contractual and Consultant Costs:** Proposals who wish to hire a consultant or contract work out must provide the following information:

### Consultants name and description of service

- **Itemized list of all direct costs and fees**
  - Salaries must have the number of personnel including the position title
  - Specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the salary

- Number of estimated hours times hourly wage
- All expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project

Applicants that are required to issue a bid should provide a narrative explaining the requirement and provide a reasonable estimate of Contractual and Consultant Costs.

**NOTE:** Proposal submissions which omit the required budget forms, budget narratives and/or line item descriptions will not receive the full point value for this criterion. Therefore, applicants should recognize that a well-written budget narrative which justifies the proposed project expenditures assists the reviewers during the review process.

### **3. Organizational Experience, Staff Capability and Management (15 points)**

***Credibility:*** The proposal establishes the applying organization's credibility and capabilities.

***Oversight:*** The proposal demonstrates that effective and consistent oversight by qualified project managers will be implemented throughout the project.

***Communication:*** The proposal demonstrates that effective communication will exist within the organization and, if applicable, with partnering organizations. The proposal includes an organizational chart of the proposed project.

***Staff:*** The proposal identifies the project director or manager and other key staff. The proposal includes resumes that demonstrate that the proposed staff has the appropriate technical and experiential backgrounds for their proposed roles. If the applicant is unable to identify the project director or manager and key staff, it must include with the application package job descriptions for positions that must be advertised. Applicants should address their contingency or back-up plans in the event of key staff departures.

***Time Commitment:*** The proposal outlines the amount of time and effort the project director or manager, key staff, and, if applicable, partnering organizations, will contribute to the project.

### **4. Implementation and Evaluation (15 points)**

***Timeline:*** The proposal includes a project timeline that outlines proposed tasks and demonstrates that sufficient time is allotted for each activity.

***Evaluation:*** The proposal describes a well-thought-out, organized review and evaluation process that will measure whether the goals of the project have been met. The evaluation should focus on measuring the impact the project seeks to make. Please be sure to include information on who will measure the goals of the project, how the goals will be measured, when the goals will be measured and what the organization will be measuring.

### **5. Presentation (5 points)**

**Quality:** The application is well-presented, well-written and void of grammatical errors.

**Format:** The application is single-sided, on 8½ by 11 inch paper. Type size is at least 12 point and margins are at least one inch. The project follows the suggested format. The application must not exceed 25 pages, including attachments such as resumes, and budget, but excluding mandatory forms and certifications (i. e. SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, additional forms/requirements for non-profit organizations). The proposal must include the cover letter followed by the table of contents with page numbers and in the order prescribed below.

### **Suggested format to describe project**

For ease of review, we ask that project descriptions be similarly organized under the headings below. **Please be as clear and concise as possible when writing your proposal.**

To maximize your score, be sure to include all information required under these headings as specified under the heading ***Technical Evaluation Criteria and Weight.***

Executive Summary (if page limitations allow)

Table of Contents (if page limitations allow)

1. Soundness or Merit of Project Design
2. Budget Appropriateness and Economic Efficiency
3. Organizational Experience, Staff Capability and Management
4. Implementation and Evaluation

### **Selection of Grant Applications**

After the panel evaluates and scores the grant applications, FNS will rank them by score, starting with the highest score and make recommendations to the selecting official. The selecting official will consider the panel recommendations. In general, awards will be based on rank funding order. However, **FNS reserves the right to fund out of rank order to achieve agency priorities (such as to grant an award to an entity that includes a joint effort between a State agency and a community-based or faith-based organization, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, etc.).** If the panel review indicates that FNS has received few or no technically acceptable proposals, the selecting official may determine that FNS will make no awards, or commit less than the \$5 million set aside for this purpose.

As mentioned above, FNS is interested in funding projects that address priorities specified on pages 4 and 5 of this RFA. However, FNS reserves the right to award grants to several such entities, or not to award any grants to such entities if it does not receive acceptable applications.

### **Determination of Award Amounts**

If an application has been selected for funding and the budget submission is realistic and well-supported, the application will be funded at the level requested. However, FNS reserves the right to fund

applications at a lesser amount if it judges that the application can be implemented with less, or if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards.

### **Award Notification and Issuance of Funds**

**FNS will notify selected State agencies or organizations in writing in September 2014. Funding of applications will be provided through the grant award/letter of credit process upon receipt of a properly executed grant agreement and subject to the availability of funding. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) expects to make funds available to the grantee in advance of need.**

## **RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

### **Required Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements**

***Quarterly Progress Reports***—Quarterly progress reports must be submitted to FNS. These progress reports must provide a description of the activities conducted during the reporting period, major accomplishments with completion dates and budget information, deviations from the proposed plan, difficulties encountered, solutions developed to overcome difficulties, and major planned activities for the next quarter. These reports are due 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. More detailed specifications for the quarterly progress report content and submission will be included in the agreement.

***Final Report***— A report of up to 25 pages must be submitted within 90 days of the expiration of the grant period. This report will be composed of a short Executive Summary and the following:

- A project description including a concise summary of the major accomplishments, the difficulties encountered, and the solutions developed to resolve the difficulties; and
- A discussion of the project results and lessons learned.

Copies of any deliverables, media or publicity releases/articles and links to materials on websites also should be included or papers resulting from the grant should be attached to the final report. All products should include an acknowledgement of the source of funding. The Federal awarding agency reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use, for Federal Government purposes, the copyright in any work developed under a grant, sub-grant, or contract under a grant or sub-grant or any rights of copyright to which a grantee, sub-grantee, or a contractor purchases ownership with grant support.

***Financial Status Reports*** – The Recipient will be required to enter the SF-425 reports into the Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) quarterly. The awardee must obtain e-authentication certification, access to FPRS, and post the SF-425 data on-line. More detailed specifications for the report will be included in the agreement.

The final financial status report will be due December 31, 2017.

Applicants chosen for award will also be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules found at 7 CFR sec. 3017.300 by doing any **one** of the following:

- Checking the Excluded Parties List found at the **System for Award Management [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov)**;
- Collecting a certification that the entity is neither excluded nor disqualified. Since a Federal certification form is no longer available, the grantee or sub-grantee electing this method must devise its own;
- Including a clause to this effect in the sub-grant agreement and in any procurement contract expected to equal or exceed \$25,000, awarded by the grantee or a sub-grantee under its grant or sub-grant;
- Sub-grantee and contractors must obtain a DUNS Number. All Federal Government awards are required to have a DUNS number. To obtain a DUNS number, contact Dun and Bradstreet at 1--866-705-5711 or visit their website at <https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions.asp>. There is no charge for a DUNS number. The DUNS number serves as a means of tracking and identifying applications for Federal assistance and is required on all applications for Federal assistance..

**Note:** FNS may request additional information from the grantee or require the grantee to complete additional forms at any time during the grant solicitation process.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

### Application Due Date

Please be aware that the grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted. Please begin the enrollment process at least 2 weeks before the application due date.

**Electronic Submission:** The complete application must be uploaded on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by **11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time on May 22, 2014**. Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. USDA will not consider any additions or revisions to an application once it is received. USDA will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications.

## SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Applications **MUST** be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

In order to submit an application via grants.gov, applicants must have obtained a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registered in both the new Systems for Award Management (SAM) and on grants.gov. The applicant is strongly advised to allow ample time to initiate the grants.gov application submission process. All applicants must have current System for Award Management (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](http://www.dnb.com)) and register in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>).

**What is SAM?** The System for Award Management (SAM) is combining federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) into one new system. This consolidation is being done in phases. The first phase of SAM incorporated the functionality from several systems, including CCR.

**For additional information regarding SAM see the following link:**

[https://www.acquisition.gov/SAM\\_Guides/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registrations%20v1.pdf](https://www.acquisition.gov/SAM_Guides/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registrations%20v1.pdf)

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

**DUNS Number:** In order to obtain or confirm a DUNS number, contact Dun and Bradstreet via the internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-888-814-1435, Monday thru Friday, 8am-9pm EST. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number. It may take several days to obtain a DUNS number.

**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. Registration should take 3-5 days. **Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete should contact SAM at <https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list>.**

**Grants.gov Registration:** In order to apply for a grant, applicants must have completed the above registrations and registered on grants.gov. The grants.gov registration process can be accessed at [www.grants.govapplicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.govapplicants/get_registered.jsp). Generally, the registration process takes between 3-5 business days.

If you are a new grants.gov 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 into grants.gov.

Applicants should allow ample time to complete the necessary steps on grants.gov.

### **Special Instructions/Notices:**

In review, in order to make an electronic submission, applicants must:

1. Obtain a DUNS number
  - a. <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or 1-888-814-1435
  - b. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number.
  - c. It may take several days to obtain a DUNS number.
2. Register in SAM
  - a. <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>
  - b. Must have organization's DUNS, entity's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on last tax return).
3. Register in grants.gov
  - a. [www.grants.govapplicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.govapplicants/get_registered.jsp)
  - b. Generally, the registration process takes between 3-5 business days.
  - c. Must have DUNS and be registered in 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.*

## **APPLICATION FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS**

**Application Format**—All applicants must adhere to the following application format. Use of this format will make it easier for grant reviewers to locate the requested information and to evaluate your application.

### **Required Standard Forms:**

A list of all required forms is included in Attachment A. All applicants must complete the following:

- SF- 424 Core Form: Application for Federal Assistance, including:
  - Data Universal Number (DUNS)
  - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number (CFDA #10.580)
- SF-424A (Budget Summary – Non-Construction Projects)
- SF-424B (Assurances – Non-Construction Projects)
- 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.”

### **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.

## **QUESTIONS**

Please direct all questions regarding this solicitation to Kimberly Shields, Grants Officer via e-mail at [Kimberly.Shields@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Shields@fns.usda.gov)

**ALL** applicants **MUST** complete the attached:

**ATTACHMENT A – Application for Federal Assistance Package**  
**Complete and sign the following forms:**

- **Application and instructions for federal assistance (SF-424)**
- **Budget information and instruction (SF-424A)**
- **Assurances – Non-construction programs (SF-424B)**
- **Disclosure of lobbying activities (SF-LLL)**

These Federal forms are available in electronic version at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).



## **ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS**

### **A. Confidentiality of an Application**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of USDA 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. Only those proposals which are funded may be released and shared with the public. Applications which do not result in an award will be not released. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **B. 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.

### **C. 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) found at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

### **D. Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25**

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

**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. Registration should take 3-5 days. Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete should contact SAM at <https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list>.

USDA 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 CCR registration with current information.

### **E. 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 CCR 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.

**F. 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, including suspension and debarment information (formerly CCR and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS)). 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.

### **G. Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent**

All corporations including non-profit corporations must comply with sections 738 and 739 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55)

**Section 738** (Felony Provision) None of the funds made available by this 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 (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency (USDA Food and Nutrition Service) is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation, or such officer or agent, and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interest of the Government.

**Section 739** (Tax Delinquency Provision) None of the funds made available by this 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 (USDA Food and Nutrition Service) is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government

## **ATTACHMENT B - Administrative Requirement Terms and Conditions**

For each project selected for funding, the applicant must sign a grant agreement, which will contain the terms and conditions of the grant. The grant program will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following Federal regulations. The Code of Federal Regulations can be found at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>, and from the Grants Officer, upon request.

These include but are not limited to:

### **A. Government-wide Regulations**

- **2 CFR Part 25: “Universal Identifier and Central Locator Contractor Registration”**
- **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 417: “Office of the Chief Financial Officer: Department of Agriculture Implementation of OMB Guidance on Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension”**
- **41 U.S.C. Section 22 “Interest of Member of Congress”**

### **B. USDA Regulations**

- **7 CFR Part 15: “Nondiscrimination”**
- **7 CFR Part 3015: “Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations”**
- **7 CFR Part 3016: “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”**
- **7 CFR Part 3018: “New Restrictions on Lobbying”**
- **7 CFR Part 3019: “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations”**
- **7 CFR Part 3021: “Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”**
- **7 CFR Part 3052: “Audits of State, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations”**

## **ATTACHMENT C – Application Package Checklist**

This checklist will assist you in completing the application and make certain you include all of the necessary information to be considered for a process and technology improvement grant. Please review the checklist to ensure the items below are addressed clearly. Your project description should relate directly to the priorities of the request. This checklist will also assist you in completing the budget narrative portion of the application.

NOTE: The statement of work must capture the bona fide need. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the project description. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed.

<b>APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Mandatory Forms</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance</li> <li>• The Government-wide Standard Form 424 (SF-424) is located on the Grants.gov Active Forms website. There is no fee associated with any of the forms available on Grants.gov. To obtain an Active Government-wide SF-424 application package, you must access the following website: <a href="http://www07.grants.gov/agencies/aforms_repository_information.jsp">http://www07.grants.gov/agencies/aforms_repository_information.jsp</a></li> <li>• This website also has a link to the list of Grants.gov compatible software that helps the applicant navigate, download software, and complete the grants.gov grant application package.</li> </ul>		
<b>Certifications/Assurances</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-Lobbying Certification Form can be found at the following website: (<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sflllin.pdf">http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sflllin.pdf</a>)</li> <li>• If the entity or applicant does not conduct lobbying activities, please indicate “not applicable” on the form.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants chosen for award will be required to attest that they are not suspended or debarred and subsequently will also be required to verify that all sub awardees and contractors are not suspended or debarred as well.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required for Non-Profit Organizations is the Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (Form 1023)</li> <li>• To include a list of the Board of Directors (if applicable)</li> <li>• And most recent audited financial statements signed by the Treasurer or the Treasurer of the Board (to be completed by both non-profit organizations and educational institutions). Applications submitted without this information will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from consideration.</li> </ul>		
<b>Correct Format</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is original application package on 8 1/2 x 11 inch white paper and single-sided?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is type size at least 12 point and margins set to one inch on all sides?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is application over 25 pages, including all required attachments? <b>NOTE:</b> Federal forms SF-424, 424 A &amp; (B), and Anti-Lobbying certifications do not count toward the 25 page limit.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you verified the authorized representative for your organization?</li> </ul>		

<b>BUDGET CHECKLIST</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Personnel</b>		
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 the current yearly salary as a percentage of time to be devoted to the project?		

<b>Fringe Benefits</b>		
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?		
<b>Travel</b>		
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?		
<b>Equipment</b>		
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?		
<b>Supplies</b>		
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?		
<b>Contractual</b>		
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 in the budget?		
Has a justification for all sole-source contracts been provided in the budget narrative, prior to approving this identified cost?		
<b>Cost Allocation</b>		
If programs other than SNAP benefit from this project are costs allocated to demonstrate that the grant funds only SNAP's share?		
<b>Other</b>		
Consultant Services: Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost shown on the budget?		
For all other line items listed under the "Other" heading, list all items to be covered under this heading along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.		
<b>Indirect Costs</b>		
Is the amount requested based upon a rate approved by a Federal Agency? If yes, is a copy of the negotiated rate agreement provided along with the application?		

### Tips for Proposal Writers

The Soundness or Merit of Project Design section of the application is your opportunity to convince reviewers that your project meets the selection criteria. Below are some general recommendations to help you present your project in a way the reviewers will find compelling and persuasive.

- Read the RFA carefully and more than once.
- State clearly in your cover letter if your application addresses the FY 2014 Priorities.
- Use the five review criteria to structure your proposal correctly.
- Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order they are presented in the instructions. Use headings to differentiate narrative sections by criterion.
- Be clear and succinct. Reviewers are not interested in jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. They are interested in learning precisely what you intend to do, and how your project responds to the selection criteria.

- Don't leave out mandatory forms such as resumes, budgets, certifications, or letters of commitment/endorsement.
- Make sure budget figures are consistent across displays and narratives.
- Avoid circular reasoning. The problem you describe should not be defined as the lack of the solution you are proposing.
- Explain how. Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
- Don't make assumptions. Do not assume your reviewers know anything about your organization, your proposed program, or your partners. Avoid overuse of acronyms.
- Use an impartial proofreader. Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the proposal.