

Summer 2011 SFSP Home Delivery and Food Backpacks Demonstration Projects: Request for Application (RFA) Questions and Answers, Part 2

RFA Clarifications

- 1. Does the 4-page maximum for sponsors' proposals include the budget and budget narrative?**

The Sponsor proposal should be a maximum of 4 pages, excluding the budget and budget narrative. There is no minimum page amount. You do not need to use the prototype if you prefer to submit your proposal in a different format.

- 2. Please clarify what is meant by "cooperation" on page 11 of the RFA. Does this refer to the sponsor or to the State agency?**

State agencies should be willing to work with the contractor to provide the data/information that will be needed to conduct a successful evaluation, and assist the contractor with any other tasks pertaining to the evaluation component.

- 3. As a sponsor interested in submitting a demonstration project proposal, who should we contact to express our interest and obtain more information about applying?**

You should contact the State agency that administers the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in your State. This information can be found at the following link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

- 4. Do you have a Word version of the RFA/sponsor proposal prototypes?**

Yes. They can be found at this link:-

http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/DemoProjects/SummerFood/MealDelivery_RFA.doc

Sponsor Eligibility

- 5. In our State, food banks (or SFAs) already have an infrastructure established during the school year to send home food backpacks on Fridays for children through the weekends. Are these food banks/SFAs eligible to participate in the Food Backpacks Demonstration Project?**

Yes, sponsors that are currently providing food backpack programs during the school year would be eligible to participate in the Food Backpacks demonstration project as long as all costs were properly allocated and separated to ensure that the demonstration project is not funding other types of unallowable costs that the sponsors may currently be funding themselves in their school-year backpack program. In addition, the demonstration project will only fund food backpacks during the summer months when school is not in session, so costs must be separated to ensure that the demonstration funds will only be used for this food during that time, and not during the school year operation of this program.

- 6. Our Upward Bound Program is a residential program that runs for 6 weeks (5 days a week) during which the students receive breakfast, lunch and supper. The students go home on weekends and return on Mondays. If we participate in the Food Backpack demonstration, can we send backpacks home with the students for every weekend during the 6 week period?**

Yes. Residential camps, such as the Upward Bound program you have described, that plan to participate in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in Summer 2011 would be eligible to participate in the Food Backpacks demonstration project to provide Food Backpacks to participating children during the days that the site is not operating SFSP.

Allowable Costs

- 7. One of our sponsors has received an offer to provide a bag of apples at no cost for each backpack. Would additional food such as this be allowed to be included in the backpacks?**

Because we currently allow donated food to be used in the SFSP, this would continue to be allowed in these demonstration projects. However, sponsors will be required to track the use of these foods, so that we can include this information in the evaluation component.

- 8. For the Food Backpack Demonstration, would it be an allowable expense to provide participating children with vouchers for foods with a high food safety concern such as milk, eggs, and bread? In our State, the organizations that run backpack programs for low-income schools during the school year provide these types of vouchers to participating children. These organizations have expressed an interest in continuing this practice should our State be awarded funding for the backpack demonstration project.**

No. The purpose of these demonstrations is to test the effects of providing families with food items through a home delivery method or a backpack method. Allowing families to use vouchers to purchase food is not within the scope of these demonstrations, and could compromise the results of the evaluations.

- 9. Is it allowable to provide one backpack with all the food for 3 children in the same family for the weekend?**

This would be ok as long as it was still manageable for someone to carry all of the food in one bag.

Confidentiality and Consent Questions

- 10. Will sponsors need to secure signed consent forms from the parents/guardians and children? Who has the responsibility for creating the consent form - the State Agency or the Sponsor?**

Consent forms are required from parents/guardians in order to receive meals through the Home Delivery demonstration, and for participation in the evaluation component of both demonstrations (Home Delivery and Food Backpacks). Only parental notification is required for children to receive Food Backpacks (e.g. sending children home with a flyer etc.).

FNS anticipates that the creation of the consent form for parents to allow meals to be delivered to their children through the Home Delivery project will occur at the local level, but the State agency may choose to assume responsibility for this task.

For the consent form for the evaluation component, we expect that the FNS evaluation contractor will be involved with developing this form with the State agency.

11. How will the issue of "confidentiality and disclosure" be maintained if we will be asking for families' names and addresses?

The National School Lunch Act allows disclosure of all of a child's eligibility information to other programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act or Child Nutrition Act. This means that it is currently permissible for schools to share information with entities involved with the implementation of other child nutrition programs, including the SFSP. Therefore, information sharing between schools and providers of the SFSP is within the protocols for proper disclosure and confidentiality of eligibility information.

In addition, there are two different reasons the names and addresses of participants will be required for these demonstration projects. The first is for participating sponsors in the Home Delivery Project to identify and invite families to participate in the meal delivery service. Because the Home Delivery meals are limited to children eligible for free and reduced-price meals, sponsors involved with the Home Delivery demonstration will need to partner with local schools/districts to receive the names and addresses of eligible children in order to receive parental consent for participation in the project. Sponsors will be responsible for ensuring that they protect this information in accordance with SFSP regulations. This maintains proper confidentiality and disclosure requirements.

The second reason why participants' contact information may be disclosed is to provide the evaluation contractor with this information so that they may contact demonstration project participants (for both projects) about participating in the evaluation component. In this situation, parents have to give consent to the sponsor to provide their contact information to the contractor to be used for evaluation purposes. Because the parents will be consenting to the release of this information, this does not violate any confidentiality or disclosure requirements.

Both the participating sponsors and the FNS evaluation contractor will be expected to strictly adhere to maintaining this information in a confidential manner.

Other Application Requirements

12. Will FNS/the FNS contractor provide the evaluation surveys in multiple languages? Will the FNS contractors speak multiple languages? If not, should the sponsors include the costs for these translation services in their budgets?

USDA will cover the translation costs required for interviewing families for the evaluation component of the demonstration projects. However, sponsors and/or State agencies should plan to cover any needed translations of outreach materials and parental consent forms into other languages for families to receive food. Therefore, this should be included in their proposed budgets.

- 13. A number of program sponsors indicated that they would be closing their sites 3-4 days in a row over the holiday periods, such as Memorial Day and Fourth of July. Am I correct that if a sponsor's site is closed on a day it traditionally operates the SFSP, even holidays, that it could replace the meals the children would be missing as long as no more than four days worth of meals are provided?**

Yes, sponsors will be allowed to provide food backpacks to children for up to four days in a row whenever their traditional SFSP site is closed, even if for most of the summer the sponsor is only providing food backpacks for two days in a row (i.e. weekends).

- 14. Are there any requirements for State matching funds?**

No. It is not necessary for States to contribute their own funds to match the amount received by FNS.

- 15. Can we operate one of these demonstration projects with our current staffing levels?**

It is up to the State Agency to determine if they are capable of providing the administrative oversight for the project with current staff. State agencies may request funding for new staff, within reason, to oversee the project.

- 16. What happens at the end of the 2-year project regarding the backpacks? Are the backpacks property of the participating sponsor and/or site?**

Since the backpacks are considered "supplies," and not "equipment," the backpacks may become property of the participating family, site or sponsor who can choose to use them however they wish at the end of the project. The State agency could also decide to claim the backpacks at the end of the project for other uses.

Washington DC Meetings

- 17. When we attend the two meetings at the national office, how long will we be required to stay?**

The meetings will involve one overnight stay. Applicants should allow two days to cover meeting and travel time.

- 18. Do the participating sponsors have to attend?**

We do not yet know what our specific requirements will be for sponsor attendance at the two DC meetings (one each year of the demonstration project). However, all sponsors should plan to include one trip each year to DC in their budgets as a placeholder given the possibility that they may be required to attend. Again, this does not mean that they will be required to attend, since we do not know what the requirements will be yet, but this will allow the cost of the attendance to already be included should they need to.

19. What is the typical lodging cost in the DC area?

The federal per diem rate for lodging in the DC area ranges from \$157 to \$211 depending on the time of year. The maximum we will reimburse State agencies is for the federal per diem rate, but you should plan to include your State per diem rate if it is capped lower than the federal one.

20. Will one meeting be scheduled during 2011 and one during 2012?

Yes. There will be a total of two meetings in Washington DC—one after Summer 2011 and the other after Summer 2012.