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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grants**

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

CFDA#: 10.546

DATES:

**RFA Release Date:** May 18, 2015

**Letter of Intent Date:** June 19, 2015

**Application Submission Date:** 11:59 EST July 18, 2015

**Award Date:** September 30, 2015

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## I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance programs. It began in its modern form in 1961 but has its origins in the Food Stamp Plan to help the needy in the 1930s. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net and provides nutrition assistance benefits via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to millions of low income people. These benefits help supplement household food budgets so recipients can purchase more healthy food.

FNS works in partnership with States in the administration of SNAP. While the vast majority of Program recipients use their benefits as intended, there are some who violate Program rules. Program violations may include a number of activities, such as falsifying income or identity in order to be eligible for benefits they may not be entitled to, or by using benefits for anything other than their intended purpose. Exchanging SNAP benefits for cash, commonly referred to as trafficking, is the most egregious Program violation. SNAP has zero tolerance for fraud and continues to work with its State partners to implement aggressive measures to improve Program integrity.

Section 29 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, (the Act) (7 U.S.C. 2036b) provides the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) resources to prevent trafficking in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Up to \$7.5 million has been appropriated for fiscal year (FY) 2015 for State agencies<sup>1</sup> to prevent recipient trafficking of SNAP benefits by employing information technologies (IT) to administer SNAP and enforce regulations.

The purpose of the SNAP Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grant Program is to provide grants on a competitive basis to State agencies for the implementation of new, or the improvement of existing, IT systems to assist with the prevention, detection, and prosecution of SNAP recipient trafficking. FNS is interested in States deploying investigation case tracking and management systems designed to monitor and track outcomes of investigations of individuals suspected of intentional Program violations (IPV), with an emphasis on trafficking outcomes. SNAP trafficking refers to the unlawful exchange of SNAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food, or the exchange of firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substance for SNAP benefits (7 CFR 271.2). The trafficking of SNAP benefits is an egregious violation of Program rules and can result in severe penalties, including criminal punishment and permanent disqualification from the Program.

This grant is intended to help States meet FNS expectations to track and report investigation activity and outcomes for State reported data on the FNS-366B form, "Program and Budget Summary Statement Part B – Program Activity Statement." This grant directly responds to findings from GAO Audit 14-641, *Enhanced Detection Tools and Reporting Could Improve Efforts to Combat Recipient Fraud* (<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-641>), encouraging

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this RFA, "State agencies" refers to the agencies that administer SNAP which are the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.

further financial incentives to better support State anti-fraud activities as well as to improve the consistency of State reporting. On October 16, 2014, FNS published a Request for Information (<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=FNS-2014-0038-0001>) to solicit stakeholder input regarding proposed changes to the FNS-366B form in order to improve the reliability and accuracy of State integrity reporting by revising data field definitions; which also may include changes in reporting frequency as well as the addition of new data elements to better capture savings from fraud prevention activities. FNS expects to publish a revised FNS-366B form next year; a final draft of the form will be provided to State agencies in December 2015 for planning purposes.

In addition, FNS intends to release shortly an Integrity Performance Measurement Guidance package for States that covers industry best practices regarding metrics to help States monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of their anti-fraud prevention activities, with an emphasis on SNAP trafficking investigation outcomes. It is expected that applications submitted to this grant program will incorporate, in the development or enhancement to an investigation case management system, best practices and metrics identified in the guidance package.

The goal of the SNAP Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grant Program is to improve outcomes for State agency activities devoted to recipient trafficking prevention, detection, and prosecution/resolution through new or improved case management systems. **Funds from this RFA are for new projects and shall not be used for the ongoing cost of carrying out an existing project.** The SNAP Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grant Program is targeting the following specific areas for consideration of grant funding:

Implementation or improvement of SNAP IPV investigation case management and tracking systems to enhance States' ability to more effectively prevent, detect, and prosecute SNAP recipient trafficking. These technologies will improve State recipient trafficking data accessibility and quality, while making case status and history available to all necessary State personnel. FNS expects States to report more reliable and accurate information on the FNS-366B form. Furthermore, access to investigation outcome data will help States better identify trends and best practices in order to respond more quickly and effectively to combat fraud and hold accountable individuals suspected of SNAP trafficking. Grant applications should ensure the following key components are addressed:

- report IPV investigation outcomes, including trafficking;
- improve the consistency and reliability of State anti-fraud activity reporting to FNS;
- incorporate data integrity controls;
- track progress of prosecution referrals and hearings;
- use performance metrics to help monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of State anti-fraud prevention activities;
- provide States better real-time access to investigation and referral data; and
- address reporting changes in the revised FNS-366B form.

FNS does not intend for this grant program to fund compliance with existing statutory or regulatory Program requirements, such as data matching. Throughout this RFA, the focus of case management is on IPV investigations and should not be confused with case management as it refers to eligibility systems. FNS does not intend for this grant program to fund improvement to a larger system development effort, such as a State eligibility system, for which tracking investigations is a sub-component. FNS expects this grant funding to specifically target new development of or enhancements to the IPV investigation case management tracking system only. Furthermore, this grant is not intended to fund enhancements to State systems to connect to FNS' electronic Disqualified Recipient System (eDRS). FNS will continue to fund all State agency activities through 50% Federal matching of all allowable administrative costs. FNS anticipates issuing future RFAs to target integrity improvements and best practices in other areas currently being evaluated by SNAP.

If the IPV case management system requires enhancements to the SNAP eligibility system, and the total project cost is greater than \$6 million, the State agency must submit advance planning documents in accordance with regulations found in 7 CFR Part 277.18 and guidance found in the FNS 901 Handbook <http://www.fns.usda.gov/apd/handbook-and-guidance>.

Proposals should clearly describe the intent and scope of the proposed investigation case management system and how it will contribute to the improvement of the prevention, detection, and prosecution of SNAP recipient trafficking. Proposals should include information about the proposed system design and functionality; how the system will interact with, or replace, existing infrastructure and current State systems; and a detailed development and implementation plan/timeline. Each project design should include quantifiable objectives, measures to assess progress toward meeting those objectives, project activities linked to meeting specific objectives, and a list of deliverables and/or milestones for the duration of the project.

## **II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

A total of up to \$7.5 million in Federal funding will be made available for the SNAP Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grant Program, contingent upon availability of funds. FNS anticipates awarding the grants through a competitive process by September 30, 2015. Grantees may use grant funds for the duration of the project period. The period of performance begins on September 30, 2015, and is not to exceed three (3) years from the start date, or September 29, 2018. FNS expects to award three (3) grants under this Request for Application (RFA), ranging from \$1 million - \$5 million, dependent on the quality and nature of the applications received. This federal award is for a grant and procurement contracts may be awarded.

## **III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

This grant opportunity is open to the 53 State agencies that administer SNAP. FNS will consider only one application per State agency. Suspended or debarred organizations are ineligible to submit applications in response to this grant solicitation. There is no State matching requirement for this grant program.

#### **IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

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

**Dawn Addison, Grants Officer**  
**Grants and Fiscal Policy Division**  
**U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS**  
**3101 Park Center Drive Room 740**  
**Alexandra, VA 22301**  
**E-mail: [dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov](mailto:dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov)**

#### **CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

Proposals should clearly describe the intent and scope of the proposed investigation case management system and how it will contribute to the improvement of the prevention, detection, and prosecution of SNAP recipient trafficking. Proposals should include information about the proposed system design and functionality; how the system will interact with, or replace, existing infrastructure and current State systems; and a detailed development and implementation plan/timeline. Each project design should include quantifiable objectives, measures to assess progress toward meeting those objectives, project activities linked to meeting specific objectives, and a list of deliverables and/or milestones for the duration of the project.

Every grantee must assess and report on its progress each quarter by using performance measures tied to specific project objectives. These measures can include process measures, output measures, and outcome measures. The proposal should describe the process for collecting and reporting these data including the data source.

Applicants should provide a narrative description of how the project will be staffed and managed, including a project organizational chart.

The proposal's project description must capture a bona fide need. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposed project description. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed.

Proposals should clearly describe the intent and scope of the proposed investigation case management system and how it will contribute to the improvement of the prevention, detection, and prosecution of SNAP recipient trafficking. Proposals should include information about the proposed system design and functionality; how the system will interact with, or replace, existing infrastructure and current State systems; and a detailed development and implementation plan/timeline. Each project design should include quantifiable objectives, measures to assess progress toward meeting those objectives, project activities linked to meeting specific objectives, and a list of deliverables and/or milestones for the duration of the project.

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Applicants should provide a narrative description of how the project will be staffed and managed, including a project organizational chart.

The proposal's project description must capture a bona fide need. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposed project description. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed.

We encourage potential applicants to carefully read the review criteria listed in this RFA (Section V.). These criteria outline the qualities FNS expects successful proposals to have and will also guide the reviewers' evaluation of proposals.

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 SNAP Recipient Integrity Information Technology Grant funds must be obligated and all activities under the Grant must be completed by September 29, 2018.

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following applicant format. The proposed project plan should be typed 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, not including the cover sheet, table of contents, resumes, budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms.

#### Special Instructions:

- Late application submission will not be considered in this competition. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received.
- Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, or certification will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted via the Grants.gov portal will not be considered.
- FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in the next fiscal year should additional funds be made available through future appropriations.
- Grant awards are subject to the availability of funds.
- Proposals should be submitted to FNS in Microsoft Word or PDF format.

#### 1. 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)

2. Table of Contents

Include relevant topic page number

3. Application Project Summary

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

4. 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.

5. Application Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. The narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct cost. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement.

6. Required Grant Application Forms

All applicants must complete the following forms:

The following grants.gov forms are required of grant applicants. They are located at [http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aforms\\_repository\\_information.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aforms_repository_information.jsp):

The following required OMB forms can be obtained at:

<https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormsMenu?source=agency>

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

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

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."

**Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) Number**

In order to submit an application via [grants.gov](http://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. 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/>).

**DUNS Number:** In order to obtain or confirm a DUNS number, if your organization does not have one, or if you are unsure of your organization's number you can contact Dun and Bradstreet via the internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-888-814-1435, Monday thru Friday, 8am-9pm EST. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number. Obtaining a DUNS number may take several days to obtain.

### **System for Award Management (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.

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

**SAM Registration:** For applicant organizations that were previously registered in the CCR, relevant applicant information is already in SAM; set up a SAM account as necessary to update any information. To register in SAM, the applicant's DUNS number, Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on the applicant's last tax return) are all required. SAM verifies all information submitted by the applicant using several systems. This verification takes at least **48 hours** after your registration is submitted to SAM. Applicants must have a valid SAM registration no later than 3 days prior to the application due date of this solicitation. **Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete should contact SAM at <https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list>.**

### **SAM Presentation/Training**

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

This will be extremely useful for SAM users that are:

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

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

**Grants.gov**

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

Allow your entity ample time to complete the necessary steps, for the submission of your grant application package, on Grants.gov.

Please be aware that the Grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted.

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

**NOTICE: Special Characters not Supported**

All applicants **MUST** follow Grants.gov guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided in the Grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (example: &, -, \*, %, /, #, -), this includes periods (.), spacing followed by a dash in the file and for word separation, use underscore (example: Attached\_File.pdf) in naming the attachments. **Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected. FNS will not accept any application rejected from [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) portal due to incorrect naming conventions.**

**LETTER OF INTENT**

The eligible applicant that intends to submit an application should submit a Letter of Intent notice by **June 19, 2015**. This notice does not obligate the applicant to submit an application but provides FNS with useful information in preparing for the review and selection process. The notice should include the potential applicant's name and address, organization's name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the primary point of contact. The applicant can send the letter via the mail or e-mail to the FNS Grants Officer identified below:

**Dawn Addison, Grants Officer  
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS  
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740  
Alexandra, VA 22301  
E-mail: [dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov](mailto:dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov)**

## **APPLICATION DUE DATE**

The complete application must be uploaded to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by **11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time, July 18, 2015**. Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. FNS will not consider any additions or revisions to an application once it is received. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications.

Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) should contact the grants officer listing above for further instructions.

Pre-award costs will not be awarded for this grant.

## **V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **EVALUATION OF GRANT APPLICATION CRITERIA**

There is no requirement for cost sharing or matching. Cost sharing will have no effect on scoring.

FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure that they contain the required documents and information. 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.

### **Evaluation Factors and Criteria**

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

#### **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 clearly demonstrates:

- A direct effect on the SNAP State agency's management of recipient trafficking cases and provides evidence that the changes would improve a State's ability to better track investigations and report outcomes from SNAP recipient trafficking prevention activities.
- A clear progression from idea to practice in a State agency.
- A clear description of the impact the project is expected to make. Impact can be described in terms of the degree to which the new technologies are expected to enhance the State agency's ability to prevent, detect, and prosecute/resolve the recipient trafficking cases.

**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 sustained after the grant period ends.

**Innovation:** The application proposes innovative development of new case management technologies.

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

## **2. Implementation and Evaluation (20 points)**

**Timeline:** The proposal includes a detailed 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.

## **3. 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.

**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 indicating the need to hire consultants or contractors for project work must include the following information:

- Consultant/contractors' 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 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.

#### **4. Staff Capability and Management (15 points)**

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

***Communication:*** The proposal includes a communication plan demonstrating that effective communication will exist within the organization. The proposal also 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 assigned. Applicants should address their contingency or back-up plans in the event of key staff departures.

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

#### **Selection of Grant Applications**

Following the initial screening process, FNS will assemble a peer panel group to review and determine the technical merits of each application. The peer panel will evaluate the proposals based on how well they address the required application components. The peer panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on the evaluation scoring. The selecting official reserves the right to award a grant to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, or project diversity. FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in the next fiscal year should additional funds be made available through future appropriations.

As mentioned above, FNS is interested in funding projects that address priorities specified on page 4 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 no later than September 30, 2015. Funds will be made available upon receipt of a signed grant award document, FNS-529.

### **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.

## **VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions; any contact from a FNS grants or program officer should not be considered as a notice of a grant award. No pre-award or pre-agreement costs incurred prior to the effective start date are allowed unless approved and stated on FNS' signed award document.

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. Only the recognized FNS authorized signature can bind the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to the expenditure of funds related to an award's approved budget.

### **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 not be released to the public. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The agency requires all panel reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. 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.

#### 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](http://www.sam.gov).

#### 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>.

The grant recipient must also register its DUNS number in the new Systems for Award Management (SAM). If you were registered in the CCR, your company's information is already in SAM and you will just need to set up a SAM account. To register in SAM you will need your entity's DUNS and your entity's 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 at <https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list..>

FNS may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with the requirements described in 2 CFR 25 to provide a valid DUNS number and maintain an active SAM registration with current information.

#### Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information 2 CFR Part 170

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006 (Public Law 109–282), as amended by Section 6202 of Public Law 110–252 requires primary grantees of Federal grants and cooperative agreements to report information on sub-grantee obligations and executive compensation. FFATA promotes open government by enhancing the Federal Government's accountability for its stewardship of public resources. This is accomplished by making Government information, particularly information on Federal spending, accessible to the general public.

Primary grantees, including State agencies, are required to report actions taken on or after October 1, 2010, that obligates \$25,000 or more in Federal grant funds to first-tier sub-grantees. This information must be reported in the Government-wide FFATA Sub-Award Reporting System (FSRS). In order to access FSRS a current SAM registration is required. A primary grantee and first-tier sub-grantees must also report total compensation for each of its five most-highly compensated executives. Every primary and first-tier grantee must obtain a DUNS number prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to grant recipients upon award.

#### Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417

Section 872 of this Act requires the development and maintenance of a Federal Government information system that contains specific information on the integrity and performance of covered Federal agency contractors and grantees. The Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) was developed to address these requirements. FAPIIS contains integrity and performance information from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, information from the SAM database, and suspension and debarment information from the SAM. FNS will review and consider any information about the applicant reflected in FAPIIS when making a judgment about whether an applicant is qualified to receive an award.

#### CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS



This grant will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle A, Chapter II. Any Federal laws, regulations, or USDA directives released after this RFA is posted will be implemented as instructed.

#### Government-wide Regulations

- 2 CFR Part 25: “Universal Identifier and 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 200: “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 400: USDA’s implementing regulation of 2 CFR Part 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 415: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations”
- 2 CFR Part 416: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”
- 2 CFR Part 417: USDA “Implementation of OMB Guidance on Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension”
- 2 CFR Part 418 USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
  - 41 U.S.C. Section 22 “Interest of Member of Congress”
  - Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Public access to Federal Financial Assistance records shall not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have been excepted from disclosure pursuant to the “Freedom of Information” regulation (5 U.S.C. 552)

General Terms and Conditions of the award may be obtained electronically. Please contact the Grants Officer at:

**Dawn Addison, Grants Officer**  
**Grants and Fiscal Policy Division**  
**U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS**  
**3101 Park Center Drive Room 740**  
**Alexandra, VA 22301**  
**E-mail: [dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov](mailto:dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov)**

## FINANCIAL REPORTING

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425, Financial Status Report data into the FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis. In order to access FPRS, the grant recipient must obtain USDA e-Authentication certification and access to FPRS. More detailed instructions for reporting will be included in the FNS Federal financial assistance award package.

## PROGRESS REPORTING

The recipient will be responsible for managing and monitoring the progress of the grant project activities and performance. The award document will indicate the reporting schedule for submitting project performance/progress reports to FNS. The recipient may be required to submit performance/progress reports to FNS using SF-PPR, Periodic Progress Report. Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the award terms and conditions, including results of the grant project.

***Quarterly 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.

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 2 CFR Part 180 by doing any **one** of the following:

- Checking the System for Award Management (SAM) found at [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.

## VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

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

**Dawn Addison, Grants Officer**  
**Grants and Fiscal Policy Division**  
**U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS**  
**3101 Park Center Drive Room 740**  
**Alexandra, VA 22301**  
**E-mail: [dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov](mailto:dawn.addison@fns.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.

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

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

1. **StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity (SF)** – StrikeForce aims to create self-sustaining, long-term economic development in persistent poverty rural communities by

increasing investment through intensive outreach and stronger partnership with community leaders, businesses, and foundations. StrikeForce seeks to improve food security by increasing access to safe and nutritious foods.

2. **Promise Zones (PZ)** - Promise Zones are part of the President's plan where the Federal government partners with and invests in selected high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities. Promise Zones leverage Federal resources to build up existing local capacity to create jobs, increase economic security, leverage private investment, expand educational opportunities, increase access to quality affordable housing, reduce violent crime and improve public safety.
3. **White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2)** – As part of the President's priority to strengthen the middle class, create jobs, and build ladders of opportunity, SC2 seeks to increase cooperation between community organizations, local leadership, and the federal government. SC2 pairs on the ground Federal inter-agency teams with the Mayor and city leadership to support the community's vision for economic development. These SC2 Teams offer technical assistance and expertise to help leverage existing Federal resources to grow local capacity and stimulate economic growth in distressed areas.
4. **Partnership for Sustainable Communities** - The Partnership for Sustainable Communities works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.
5. **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)** - KYF2 strengthens the connection between farmers and consumers to better meet critical goals, including reinvigorating rural economies, promoting job growth, and increasing healthy and local food access in America. Through KYF2, USDA integrates programs and policies that stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development, foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers, and cultivate healthy eating habits and educated consumers.

### **RFA Application Checklist**

All proposals submitted under this RFA must contain the applicable elements as described in this announcement. The application must be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), by midnight on July 18, 2015. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the proposal is complete and in the proper order prior to submission.

- ✓ Read the RFA carefully, usually more than once.
- ✓ Have you obtained a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registered the number in the System for Award Management (SAM)?

- ✓ Have you verified that your SAM is active?
- ✓ Have you registered your entity in grants.gov and are you authorized as a user in grants.gov to submit on behalf of your agency?
- ✓ Have you prepared and submitted the appropriate forms as shown under the Required Standard Application Forms section of this RFA?
- ✓ Have you included the RFA CFDA # 10.546 on your application?
- ✓ Have you included your contact information: telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address?
- ✓ Have you addressed, met, and considered any program specific requirements or restrictions?
- ✓ Is the project’s proposal clearly stated?
  - Does it comply with any format requirements?
  - Does it comply with the page limitation?
  - Most importantly does it directly relate to the RFA’s objectives and priorities?
  - Don’t assume that reviewers know anything about your organization and its work.
- ✓ Have one or more persons read your proposal who did not participate in its writing to ensure that it was clear to them?
- ✓ Does the proposed project and budget meet the bona fide needs of the RFA?
- ✓ Is the budget summary included?
  - Does it agree with the calculations shown on the OMB budget form?
  - Is the budget in line with the project description?
- ✓ Be sure to submit a timely application into www.Grants.gov in order to meet the RFA application deadline.
- ✓ FNS reserves the right to request additional information not clearly addressed in the initial application.

**RFA Budget Narrative Checklist**

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

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.

	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)?		
<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? For example, include excerpt from travel regulations.		
<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?		
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 x hourly wages, 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 under this heading along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.		
Indirect Costs		
Has the applicant obtained a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most recent and signed negotiated rate agreement must be provided along with the application.		
If no negotiated agreement exists, the basis and the details of the indirect costs to be requested should also be reflected in the budget.		

### 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 2015 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.