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## **Development and Implementation of Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities – Cooperative Agreement**

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**Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications (RFA) 10.579**

**Release Date: September 23, 2022**

**Application Due Date: 11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time (EST), November 28, 2022**

**Anticipated Award Date: January 2023**

OMB Burden Statement: The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The estimated average time required to complete this information collection is 60 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0512). Do not return the completed form to this address.

## Table of Contents

APPLICATION CHECKLIST .....	1
DEFINITIONS .....	2
1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES.....	3
2. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION .....	6
3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION .....	11
4. APPLICATION & SUBMISSION INFORMATION .....	13
5. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION .....	24
6. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION .....	26
7. FEDERAL AWARDED AGENCY CONTACTS.....	33
8. OTHER INFORMATION .....	33
APPENDIX A: RFA BUDGET NARRATIVE CHECKLIST .....	34
APPENDIX B: FNS-906 GRANT PROGRAM ACCOUNTING SYSTEM & FINANCIAL CAPABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	36
APPENDIX C: FNS-908 PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PPR) .....	38

## Application Checklist

This Application Checklist provides applicants with a list of the required documents. However, USDA Food and Nutrition Service expects that applicants will read the entire Request for Applications (RFA) prior to the submission of their application and comply with all requirements outlined in the solicitation. The Application Checklist is for applicant use only and should not be submitted as part of the Application Package.

Complete the following **at least four weeks** prior to submission:

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

When **preparing your application**, ensure:

- Application format and narrative meet the requirements included in section 4 "[Application & Submission Information](#)." This includes page limits, priorities outlined in section 4, and all necessary attachments, including the cover sheet (Attachment A).

When **preparing your budget**, refer to [Appendix A: Budget Narrative Checklist](#) and ensure the following information is included:

- All key staff proposed to be paid by this cooperative agreement.
- The percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- Your organization's fringe benefit rate and amount as well as the basis for the computation.
- The type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds.
- Itemized travel expenses (including type of travel), attendee objectives, travel justifications, and basis for lodging estimates.
- Types of equipment and supplies, justifications, and estimates, ensuring that the budget is in line with the project description.
- Information for all contracts and justification for any sole-source contracts.
- Justification, description, and itemized list of all consultant services.
- Indirect cost information [either a copy of a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or if no agreement exists and the applicant has never been approved for a NICRA, they may charge up to 10% de minimis]. If the applicant is requesting the de minimis rate or indirect costs are not requested, please indicate this in the budget narrative.

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

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

## Definitions

**Non-governmental entity:** An organization not belonging to or associated with any government. Examples include, but are not limited to, an accredited college/university, private or public non-profit or for-profit research institution.

**Non-monetary awards:** Not of or relating to money (no cash or gift cards).

**Office of Management and Budget (OMB):** OMB serves the President of the United States in overseeing the implementation of his or her vision across the Executive Branch. OMB's mission is to assist the President in meeting policy, budget, management, and regulatory objectives and to fulfill the agency's statutory responsibilities.

**Portable Document Format (PDF):** A versatile file format created by Adobe that provides a reliable way to present and exchange documents regardless of the software, hardware, or operating systems being used by anyone who views the document.

**Rural School Food Authority:** The majority of students within the School Food Authority are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41, 42, or 43 according to the [National Center for Education Statistics online tool](#).

**School Food Authority (SFA):** The governing body which is responsible for the administration of one or more schools; and has the legal authority to operate the Program therein (i.e., National School Lunch Program) or be otherwise approved by USDA Food and Nutrition Service to operate the Program.

**School meals:** A meal that qualifies for reimbursement with Federal funds because it has met USDA meal requirements and nutrition standards for school meal programs (i.e., National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program).

**Small School Food Authority:** SFA with an enrollment of less than or equal to 5,000 students.

**State agency:** For the purpose of this cooperative agreement, State agencies are responsible for the administration of school meal programs. State agencies are a link between USDA Food and Nutrition Service and local Program operators, ensuring the Programs are managed according to Federal requirements. State agencies facilitate communication between the Program operators and USDA Food and Nutrition Service, guaranteeing the success of the Programs. To see a list of State agencies, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map?f%5B0%5D=program%3A39>.

**Sub-grant:** An award of financial assistance in the form of money made under a grant by a grantee to an eligible sub-grantee.

# 1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

## 1.1 Background

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are Federally assisted meal programs operating in public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. These programs provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or no-cost meals to children each school day. School lunches and breakfasts provided through these programs (i.e., school meals) must meet Federal nutrition requirements, which are based upon the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA).

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the NSLP and SBP at the Federal level. At the State level, the NSLP and SBP are administered by State agencies, which operate the Program through agreements with School Food Authorities (SFAs). While USDA establishes meal pattern requirements and weekly dietary specifications for school meals, decisions about the specific foods to serve and how the foods are prepared are made by SFAs.

In 2012, the USDA updated school meal requirements, including revising nutrition standards to reflect the most recent DGA at that time. This included: increasing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; adjusting requirements for milk; reducing sodium; and setting calorie standards. Many schools successfully implemented the updated nutrition standards. Students' Healthy Eating Index scores – a measure of how closely diets reflect the DGA – increased, and research showed children received their healthiest meals of the day at school. However, legislative and administrative actions delayed full implementation of the requirements for milk, whole grains, and sodium. Further, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic caused major disruptions to the NSLP and SBP, while highlighting the critical role schools play in ensuring kids are well fed.

In February 2022, USDA published the [Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Final Rule \(hereafter referred to as “Transitional Standards”\)](#). This new rule gives schools time to transition from COVID-19 pandemic operations toward more nutritious meals that align with the 2020–2025 DGA, before updated school meal patterns are established in the Final Meal Pattern Rule for school year (SY) 2024–2025 and beyond. The Transitional Standards began in SY 2022–2023 and will continue through SY 2023–2024.

USDA FNS has established the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through food systems transformation, SFA recognition and technical assistance, the generation and sharing of innovative ideas and tested practices, and grants. This Initiative consists of four key activities:

1. **The Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards for SFAs** will recognize and share best practices from SFAs that have made significant improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals.
2. **The Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for Small and/or Rural SFAs** will offer competitive grants of up to \$150,000 per grant for small and/or rural SFAs experiencing challenges in the improvement of the nutritional quality of their school meals due to limited staffing, difficulty in accessing training, increased food costs due to limited purchasing power, lack of physical space, and outdated kitchen equipment. The grants are intended to help small and/or rural SFAs overcome these challenges, improve the nutritional quality of school meals, and meet Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award criteria.

3. **Healthy Meals Summits** will convene Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients and School Food Systems Transformation grantees to be recognized, share best practices, and discuss strategies for sustaining their achievements into the future.
4. **School Food Systems Transformation Grants** will stimulate innovation in strengthening the availability of nutritious food products in the kindergarten–12<sup>th</sup> (K–12) grade school food marketplace.

The Healthy Meals Incentives activities noted above are expected to increase utilization, and thereby demand, for nutritious agricultural commodities, such as whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits as well as food products that reflect various cultures. These efforts are also positioned to strengthen small and rural SFA's access to nutritious agricultural commodities through food systems transformation and grants to small and rural SFA's. The collection and sharing of best practices regarding SFA's use of nutritious agricultural commodities in school meals, as well as the incentivization of practices such as nutrition education (including farm to school nutrition education), use of local agricultural products in scratch cooking, and the development of culturally diverse school meal menu items is also expected to indirectly benefit producers that supply food products to schools.

This Development and Implementation of Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities RFA specifies USDA FNS' intent to enter into a cooperative agreement with a non-governmental entity to assist with the recognition awards, grants for SFAs, and the planning and implementation of the Healthy Meals Summits. School Food Systems Transformation Grants are not an activity included in this RFA announcement but are a part of the overall Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative. These grants will be released under a separate RFA.

## 1.2 Description of the Cooperative Agreement and Summary of Activities

This RFA is an announcement of the availability of funds for a cooperative agreement to develop and manage the following components and activities of the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, with substantial involvement by USDA FNS. A summary of activities is provided below. Additional details can be found under section 4.1 "[Content and Form of Application Submission \(Proposal Requirements\)](#)."

1. **The Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards for SFAs**
  - a. Develop and maintain a secure website and online application process for recognition award applications.
  - b. Develop and implement a communications campaign to promote the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and encourage SFAs to apply for the awards.
  - c. Provide customer service and technical assistance to SFAs on the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards application, award criteria, and required documentation.
  - d. Review award applications and supporting documentation against award criteria, provided by USDA FNS, and recommend recognition award recipients to USDA FNS. USDA FNS anticipates at least 1,000 SFAs will apply for at least one award.
  - e. Develop non-monetary recognition awards and provide them to award recipients approved by USDA FNS.
  - f. Collect and communicate best practices and success stories from recognition award recipients.
2. **The Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for Small and/or Rural SFAs**
  - a. Create, post, and advertise the RFA for Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for small and/or rural SFAs (these grants are sub-grants under the cooperative agreement).

- b. Pre-screen, review, and evaluate sub-grant applications against established criteria (agreed upon by USDA FNS). Ensure applicants are eligible under the definitions of small and rural (see “[Definitions](#)”) and are SFAs participating in the NSLP and/or SBP in the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.
- c. Award, with USDA FNS’ approval, sub-grants of up to \$150,000 per sub-grant to at least 200 eligible SFAs.
- d. Provide technical assistance and training to sub-grantees on strategies to improve school meal quality and meet Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards criteria.
- e. Monitor sub-grantee progress and financial reports.
- f. Collect and communicate best practices and success stories from sub-grant recipients.

### 3. Healthy Meals Summits

- a. Provide event planning services and travel support for two Healthy Meals Summits. The cooperator will also coordinate these efforts with USDA FNS and its cooperators/grantees and stakeholders, in particular the recognition of School Food Systems Transformation grantees at the Healthy Meals Summits.

Efforts funded under this RFA will help facilitate SFAs transition from meal service flexibilities implemented as part of the COVID-19 public health emergency and empower SFAs to work with producers to provide school meals that include more whole grains and are lower in added sugars and sodium. Such efforts will, in turn, support agricultural producers through increased marketplace demand and the sharing of positive success stories on the acceptance of such foods as part of school meals.

The anticipated period of performance for this agreement will be from February 2023–December 31, 2025. USDA anticipates awarding up to \$47 million in grant funding to one cooperator to carry out the activities under the Development and Implementation of Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities RFA. Activities to be conducted under this cooperative agreement can be found under section 4.1 “[Content and Form of Application Submission \(Proposal Requirements\)](#).”

### 1.3 Legislative Authority and Other Applicable Directives

**Legislative Authority:** The legislative authority for this grant announcement is contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Section 751, Subtitle B ([P.L. 116-260](#)), which authorizes funding for activities to respond to the coronavirus by providing support for agricultural producers, growers, and processors impacted by coronavirus, including producers that supply local food systems, including schools. The activities under this RFA are expected to result in increased demand for nutritious agricultural products and to indirectly benefit the producers that supply SFAs with these products. The recognition awards are expected to highlight best practices in the use of these agricultural products, while subgrants to small and rural schools may impact their purchasing power and access to these products.

**Other Applicative Directives:** Pursuant to Federal regulations at 5 CFR part 1320, information being collected through this cooperative agreement for sub-grants and the application of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards, is subject to OMB approval prior to the collection of this information. To meet the necessary timelines for the implementation of the sub-grants and recognition awards, USDA FNS is developing the sub-grant application form and Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards application (and associated awards and criteria) and will submit them to OMB for approval. This

cooperative agreement awardee shall use the OMB-approved forms when completing the activities under this RFA.

In alignment with the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), this cooperative agreement takes a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all programming, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. To reflect this, bonus points in scoring will be given for applications that incorporate and describe the project’s ability to affect a meaningful impact on racial equity and inclusion and/or that contract with businesses with economically or socially disadvantaged owners to achieve the objectives of the cooperative agreement.

### 1.4 Key Objectives

Below is a list of the objectives of this cooperative agreement. Proposed activities should be clearly aligned to these objectives and their associated activities and indicators as noted in section 4 [“Activities/Indicators Tracker.”](#)

#	Objectives
1	Develop, implement, and end a Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards initiative that recognizes SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP for meeting USDA FNS-established criteria for improving school meals.
2	Provide funding in the form of sub-grants and provide technical assistance to small and/or rural SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP to assist them in overcoming staffing, training, food purchasing, and supplies and equipment challenges to improving the nutritional quality of school meals and meet Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award criteria.
3	Plan and implement two Healthy Meals Summits attended by Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients and School Food Systems Transformation Grant recipients.

## 2. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

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

1. Total amount of funding expected to award: \$47 million
2. Anticipated award announcement date: January 2023
3. Expected total amount of Federal award: Not to exceed \$47 million
4. Anticipated start dates and period of performance: February 2023–December 31, 2025
5. Anticipated amounts and/or numbers of awards: 1 award not to exceed \$47 million
6. Application due date: November 28, 2022
7. Estimated funding per sub-grant award: \$150,000 to at least 200 small and/or rural SFAs for a total of \$30 million of the \$47 million available (find more information in section 2.2 [“Sub-Grant Funding”](#))

**Please note:**

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



## 2.1 Funding

Funding of this award will be provided through the Grant Award/Letter of Credit process, upon receipt of a fully executed cooperative agreement between USDA FNS and the cooperator. The award will be made via cooperative agreement between USDA FNS and the cooperator. This agreement is a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Federal government and the cooperator. The roles and responsibilities of both the cooperator and USDA FNS will be stated in the terms and conditions of the award document (see section 6 "[Federal Award Administration Information](#)"). FNS substantial involvement in this agreement is outlined in section 2.3 "[Roles and Responsibilities](#)."

Approximately \$47 million is available for funding to accomplish the goals and deliverables described in the RFA. This cooperative agreement will be awarded on a competitive basis, based on the review of all proposals according to section 5.1.2 "[Evaluation Factors and Criteria](#)" outlined in this RFA.

Funds may be provided incrementally to the cooperator. Milestones will be mutually established between the cooperator and USDA FNS to trigger the release of funds. Grant funds will be available to the cooperator in advance of need.

## 2.2 Sub-Grant Funding

The following information is intended to provide applicants with information to help applicants make informed decisions in the development of their proposal and budget.

1. Using a competitive process, USDA FNS expects the cooperator to award at least 200 sub-grants of up to \$150,000 each to small and/or rural SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP, for a total of \$30 million of the \$47 million available for this funding opportunity.
2. Of the remaining \$17 million not intended for sub-grants to small and/or rural SFAs, the cooperator may enter into other cooperative agreements with, or provide sub-grants to other entities for the purposes of completing work under this RFA.
3. USDA FNS reserves the right to reallocate or recompetete unused sub-grant funds if fewer than 200 small and/or rural SFAs are awarded, or if less than the full amount of sub-grant funding is awarded.
4. Eligible small and/or rural SFAs may include SFAs from the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.

## 2.3 Project Roles and Responsibilities

USDA FNS has structured this award as a cooperative agreement; therefore, the cooperator can expect substantial collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in the management of the project by USDA FNS. USDA FNS will provide technical assistance and consultation to the cooperator to support the implementation, communication, evaluation, and dissemination of the cooperative agreement activities from February 2023 through December 31, 2025. USDA FNS will provide advice and comments on all aspects of the project in advance of implementation and in a manner and timeframe agreed upon between the cooperator and USDA FNS.

At the discretion of USDA FNS, substantial involvement with the cooperator includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Participating in conversations regarding plans to meet the project's goals and objectives, requirements, and deliverables.
2. Participating in the development and implementation of strategies to ensure high levels of project integrity.

3. Assisting in determination of appropriate systems, processes, activities, and timelines, to achieve project outcomes.
4. Collaborating on the development of the RFA for sub-grants, including allowable and unallowable costs.
5. Collaborating on the development and implementation of the communication campaign to promote sub-grants to small and rural SFAs.
6. Providing technical input so the cooperator can assist SFAs in applying for sub-grants.
7. Providing approval of the selection of sub-grant awardees.
8. Consulting on the development of websites and online applications.
9. Providing technical input so the cooperator can assist SFAs in applying for recognition awards.
10. Approving all uses of the USDA logo.
11. Collaborating on the communication plan to promote the recognition awards and assisting in the development of a strategy to inform award winners, providing them with non-monetary awards, and communicating outcomes.
12. Approving award recipients monthly.
13. Assisting in the planning of the Healthy Meals Summits, including providing input and approval of the dates, times, agendas, and locations.
14. Collaborating with the cooperator to revise or rescope plans to reflect project needs, activities, and/or opportunities and challenges in the project.
15. Approving the final list of Healthy Meals Summit invitees.

The cooperator has overall responsibility for planning, implementing, and operating all aspects of the project. The cooperator shall:

1. Select and/or hire appropriately credentialed staff to manage and operate the project.
2. Conduct appropriate training and provide necessary support for staff and other partners to successfully handle project responsibilities.
3. Ensure staff, partners, and contractors fulfill their responsibilities and provide deliverables in the appropriate timeframe.
4. Keep USDA FNS informed on critical junctures and checkpoints after award of cooperative agreement, including management plan, budget plan, award plans, training and technical assistance plans, and design and implementation plans which were submitted in the application and response.
5. Carry out all activities necessary to implement, operate, and evaluate the project as described in the approved project plan.
6. Develop a plan of deliverables that will include metrics to measure success of the project as described in the approved project plan.
7. Meet specific obligations and milestones as specified in this cooperative agreement.
8. Ensure use of the USDA logo has USDA approval and is in accordance with the USDA Style Guide at: <https://www.usda.gov/style-guide/logo>.
9. Attend progress meetings via teleconference or in-person, as required by USDA FNS.
10. Account for project funds separately from all other funds and establish financial and management reporting and controls to assure that project funds are not commingled or used inappropriately. A separate and distinct audit trail shall be established and maintained for the expenditure of project funds that clearly demonstrates that they are used solely for project purposes.
11. Keep all sub-grant and recognition award applications and associated documents secure in accordance with Federal record keeping requirements. The cooperator shall transfer these records to USDA FNS upon the end of the cooperative agreement.

12. The cooperator will be expected to not only collaborate with USDA FNS on a regular basis, but with other Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative partners and cooperators.

## 2.4 Award Period and Project Timeline

All funds must be obligated and all activities under the cooperative agreement must be completed by December 31, 2025. Key dates and timeline considerations that the cooperator shall meet under this RFA include the following:

- **July 1, 2023–June 30, 2025:** SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP will submit recognition award application forms to the cooperator via an online OMB-approved application form.
- The cooperator shall review recognition award application forms and associated documentation against award criteria provided by USDA FNS. This review will occur on a rolling basis, and the cooperator will inform applicants of the status of their application **within two months of submission**. USDA FNS shall approve the list of awardees prior to this notification.
- **The Healthy Meals Incentives Sub-Grants shall be awarded before the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award application period begins (i.e., prior to July 1, 2023).** The cooperator may not release the sub-grant RFA until OMB has approved the sub-grant application form. USDA FNS will review and approve the proposed list of sub-grantees before they are notified of their grant award. USDA FNS intends for the sub-grant application period to occur for a designated amount of time and to be awarded at one time to all successful applicants. These sub-grants will **not** be awarded on a rolling basis.
- **The dates, times, agendas, locations, and invitees for the Healthy Meals Summits will be determined in collaboration with USDA FNS.** Up to two Healthy Meals Summits will occur during the period of performance on two different dates.

## 2.5 Cooperator Requirements

The cooperator must be a non-governmental entity. The cooperator and/or their partners must have experience working with SFAs, including the provision of funding to SFAs. The cooperator and/or its partners must demonstrate expertise in school food service and in working with school nutrition professionals to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Further, the cooperator and/or its partners must have experience in planning and implementing conferences and meetings. Cooperator experience in managing a recognition awards program is highly desired. Note: Any conflict of interest identified by the cooperator related to the organization, partners, or a specific staff member must be reported to USDA FNS. See section 3.4 "[Conflict of Interest](#)" for additional details.

## 2.6 Allowable Costs

All requested costs must be allowable, allocable, necessary, reasonable, and in accordance with the OMB Code of Federal Regulations Cost Principles as follows:

- **2 CFR Part 200:** "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards."
- **2 CFR Part 400:** "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards."

Among other costs, budgets may include expenses related to staff, sub-grants, technology, supplies, meeting expenses, travel, and marketing.

### **Supplies**

- These expenditures must be reasonable and necessary to perform the grant project.
- Expenditures for supplies (including small equipment less than \$5,000) are allowable expenses.

### **Event Activities**

- Reasonable expenditures related to the Healthy Meals Summits include but are not limited to venues, rental of audio-visual equipment, meals (that are part of the actual recognition summit), travel (including stipends to recognition award recipients for their travel to the Healthy Meals Summits), and award-related materials.

### **Staffing Costs**

- The salary and benefits for the Project Director and other justified key staff are allowable expenses.
- Contracted employee salaries as allocated to grant activities are allowable expenses.

### **Technology**

- Procurement of technology (both hardware and software such as tablets, laptops, display boards, etc.) necessary to implement grant activities are an allowable expense.
- The development, operations, maintenance, and hosting of a website/portal and online award applications for SFAs are allowable expenses.

### **Marketing and Promotion**

- Development and publication of videos, brochures, advertisements, and social media graphics for purposes of informing SFAs of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award and Sub-Grant opportunity.
- Promotional “swag” and “door prize” items **are not** an allowable cost. Examples of unallowable promotional items include blankets, buttons, candy, clothing, coloring books, cups, fidget spinners, hats, holiday ornaments, jar grip openers, keychains, koozies, magnets, neckties, stress balls, stuffed animals, thermoses, tote bags, trading cards, and writing utensils.
- Mascots **are not** an allowable cost.
- Costs of exhibiting at conferences attended by School Nutrition Directors for the purposes of promoting the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards are allowable costs.

### **Recognition Awards**

- Non-monetary recognition awards are allowable costs and may include things such as digital badges, banners, certificates, video messages, etc. The non-monetary awards shall be consistent with the spirit of the promotion of healthy food and beverage choices, motivational, and specific to the intent of the recognition awards activities described under this RFA and be of a nature that publicly displays the achievement of the SFA to the public for an extended period. Other non-monetary recognition awards may require prior USDA FNS approval.
- Non-monetary recognition awards including vacations, spa packages, hotel stays, parties, or other prizes of this nature **are not** allowable costs.
- Gift cards, cash, and other monetary awards **are not** allowable costs.

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

- Delivery of training and technical assistance to sub-grantees to help improve the sodium, added sugars, and whole grain content in school meals, and to explain the application process for the recognition awards.
- Translation services, as necessary and appropriate, are an allowable expense.

- Printing, duplication, storage, and distribution of marketing, technical assistance, and training materials are allowable expenses.
- Costs for adapting materials into languages other than English and accessible formats (i.e., compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) are allowable expenses.
- Development and distribution of resources including best practices and success stories featuring small, rural, and underserved SFAs, based on the SFA experiences are allowable expenses.

**Travel:**

- All associated costs for the Project Director and other key staff to attend the Healthy Meals Summits are allowable expenses.
- All associated costs for the Project Director and other key staff as needed to attend meetings at the USDA FNS National Office in Alexandria, VA during the period of performance of the grant are allowable expenses.
- Other travel as needed are allowable expenses and must be justified.

*2.6.1 Allowable Costs for Sub-Grants*

- Funds may be used for SFA staffing, contractual services, training, school meal food samples and supplies for student taste-test events, school food service equipment, nutrient analysis software, travel, and other direct costs specifically to assist in the provision of healthier school meals as described under the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards criteria.
- All sub-grant budget line items must be allowable costs as defined in the RFA and 2 CFR 200 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>).
- Proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project’s goals and objectives. All funding requests must be in whole dollars only.

### **3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

#### **3.1 Eligible Applicants**

This RFA is open to all non-governmental entities, including accredited colleges/universities, private or public non-profit or for-profit research institutions, or organizations with experience working in school food service and working with school nutrition professionals to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Further, the cooperator and/or its partners must have experience in planning and implementing conferences and meetings. Cooperator experience in managing a recognition awards program is highly desired.

#### **3.2 Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations**

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

#### **3.3 Other Eligibility Criteria**

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

**Note:** Eligible SFAs for sub-grants and recognition awards include SFAs from the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.

### 3.4 Conflict of Interest

If any conflicts of interest are identified by the applicant (related to the organization, partners, or a specific staff member), a discussion of what steps the applicant will take to ensure the successful implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of this cooperative agreement and the achievement of the outcomes as defined in the RFA must be provided. A conflict of interest may be a situation in which the applicant may accrue profit through association with this cooperative agreement (such as through the sale of food items or consultant services to SFAs) or have organizational goals and objectives that are incompatible with this cooperative agreement. **If no conflicts of interest exist, that must be stated by the applicant in the Applicant Information section of the application.**

### 3.5 Pre-Award Screening Requirements

In reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, prior to making a Federal award, Federal awarding agencies, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205, are required to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualifications or financial integrity information. Additionally, Federal awarding agencies are required to have a framework in place for evaluating the risks posed by applicants before they receive Federal awards. The USDA FNS review of risk posed by applicants will be based on the following:

1. SAM.gov, the *System for Award Management*, the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS
2. FAPIIS, the *Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System* that has been established to track contractor misconduct and performance
3. USDA FNS Risk Assessment Questionnaire
  - a. Applicants must complete the Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire that allows USDA FNS to evaluate aspects of the applicant's financial stability, quality of management systems, and history of performance, reports, and findings from audits. The questionnaire contains questions that may be an indicator of potential risk.

The evaluation of the information obtained from the designated systems and the risk assessment questionnaire may result in USDA FNS imposing special conditions or additional oversight requirements that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

### 3.6 Publications and Acknowledgement of USDA Support

As outlined in 2 CFR 415.2, grant recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA FNS support on any publications written or published with grant support and, if feasible, on any publication reporting the results of, or describing, a grant-supported activity. Recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA FNS support on any audiovisual which is produced with grant support and which has a direct production cost of over \$5,000.

1. When acknowledging USDA support, use the following language: "This material is based upon work that is supported by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture." The cooperator must follow the [USDA Style Guide](#) when using the USDA logo.
2. Cooperators *may* be asked to host USDA officials for a site visit during their grant award. All costs associated with the site visit will be paid for by USDA and are not expected to be included in grant budgets.
3. The cooperator will be in close communication/review with USDA FNS throughout the cooperative agreement period of performance and receive approvals as necessary for any publications and web material written or published with grant support.

4. All aspects of the website, including online application forms, must be in compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (<https://www.section508.gov>).
5. Appropriate non-discrimination (EEO statement) language is used on all websites and materials as directed and provided by USDA FNS.

## 4. APPLICATION & SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 4.1 Content and Form of Application Submission

To apply for this opportunity, the cooperator is required to develop a project proposal to administer and manage the Development and Implementation of Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities Cooperative Agreement. The project proposal must only include activities consistent with section 1.4 "[Key Objectives](#)" defined under this RFA.

USDA FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this cooperative agreement to adhere to the following application format. The proposed project plan should be presented on 8 ½" x 11" PDF document with at least 1-inch margins on the top and bottom. All pages should be single-spaced, in 12-point font. The project narrative with relevant information should be captured on no more than 20 pages, not including the cover sheet, table of contents, executive summary, applicant information, timeline, budget, budget narrative, and appendices (including, at a minimum, staffing plan, organization chart, key staff resumes, and required forms). All pages, excluding the form pages, must be numbered.

#### **Special Instructions:**

- Late application submission will not be considered in this competition. USDA FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via Grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline.
- Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, and/or certifications will not be considered.
- Applications missing a written proposal or budget narrative will not be considered.
- USDA FNS reserves the right to request clarification on any application submitted in response to this solicitation.
- Applications not submitted via Grants.gov will not be considered.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, USDA FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.

#### **Cover Sheet**

The cover page (Attachment A) shall be completed.

#### **Table of Contents**

The Table of Contents shall include relevant sections, sub-sections, and associated page numbers.

#### **Executive Summary (1 page)**

The application should clearly describe the proposed project activities and anticipated outcomes that would result if the proposal were to be funded. This section should briefly describe any planned or existing partnerships with other entities who have committed to working with the applicant on

proposed activities, summarize the applicant’s capacity to complete the activities, and note any innovative or creative aspects of the proposal.

**Applicant Information (1 page)**

The application shall provide a narrative description of the applicant’s organizational structure, capacity to complete activities outlined in this RFA, and experience in school food service and working with school nutrition professionals to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Specifically address any experience developing, implementing, and managing a national school meals award program and/or sub-grant programs. If the organization has a current USDA grant or cooperative agreement, it shall be mentioned in this section.

This section shall also describe any partnerships/agreements/contracts with organizations/companies who have committed to working with the applicant on the proposed activities. Documentation of such commitment shall be included in the Appendices of the application. This section should clearly summarize how the applicant and/or its partners or contractors have experience in awarding grants to SFAs, experience in managing a recognition awards program, and experience in planning large conferences or meetings.

This section shall also note any efforts to contract with businesses with economically or socially disadvantaged owners to achieve the objectives of this cooperative agreement or to partner or work collaboratively with organizations to affect a meaningful impact on racial equity and inclusion under the objectives of this cooperative agreement.

Any conflict of interest identified by the cooperator related to the organization, partners, or a specific staff member must be reported to USDA FNS and must be described in this section. A discussion of what steps the applicant will take to ensure a successful implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of this cooperative agreement and the achievement of the outcomes as defined in the RFA must be included, if applicable. See section 3.4 “[Conflict of Interest](#)” for additional details.

**Project Narrative (20 pages)**

The project narrative should identify how the applicant is proposing to meet the [Key Objectives](#) (section 1.4) of this cooperative agreement. In preparing the Project Narrative, provide the information requested in the order presented below:

- **Overall Introduction**  
Briefly explain the reasons for your interest to apply for this RFA and any relevant experiences or partnerships.
- **Proposal Requirements**  
The project narrative shall describe the applicants proposed plan and timeline for the development and implementation of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards, Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities, and Healthy Meals Summits. The project timeline should start in February 2023 and end December 31, 2025. Include dates for important project milestones and deadlines as described in this RFA. The project narrative should address the following specific tasks:
  1. **Create, post, and advertise the RFA for sub-grants.** The cooperator shall collaborate with USDA FNS to incorporate the purpose, objectives, and specific sub-grant requirements into the RFA.



- 2. Develop and maintain a secure website and online application process for sub-grant applications and recognition award applications.** The website shall present the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants for SFAs to the public. The recognition award applications must use award categories, criteria, and the OMB-approved application form provided by USDA FNS. The sub-grant applications must use the OMB-approved application forms provided by USDA FNS. The website shall provide training and technical assistance tools to assist SFAs in successfully submitting applications. It shall accept, manage, store, and index applications, as well as the required documentation for each application, including PDFs, videos, and image files. The website shall provide applicants with confirmation of the date and time of their application submission. The website shall include an interactive map to showcase SFAs that have received recognition awards and/or sub-grants. The cooperator shall be able to provide USDA with standard website analytics and award-specific analytics, as agreed upon with USDA FNS. The website must utilize USDA FNS-approved branding, image art, or graphics.
- 3. Accessibility, Privacy, Civil Rights and Reasonable Accommodations.** All aspects of the website, including online application forms, digital or published materials, etc. must be in compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (<https://www.section508.gov>). Appropriate non-discrimination (EEO statement) language must be used on all websites and materials as directed and provided by USDA FNS. The website must also include a privacy policy statement that states how the website will collect, handle, and process the data of customers and visitors. The cooperator shall provide reasonable accommodation for all webinars, videos, and other materials intended for the public, such as providing captioning services to enable equitable participation.
- 4. Pre-screen, review, and evaluate sub-grant applications against established criteria (agreed upon by USDA FNS),** which includes the following information:
  - a. SFA information (enrollment, locality, etc.)
  - b. Project design and implementation: how the grant project will be implemented including the appropriate use of grant funds and key staff

The cooperator shall review sub-grant applications for completeness. The cooperator shall use a competitive process to evaluate and score sub-grant applications and recommend applicants for award to USDA FNS. USDA FNS will have final approval on awardees.

- 5. Award sub-grants to at least 200 SFAs.** This sub-grant award is intended to be a one-time award, dependent on the number of applicants and recipients. Additional information can be found in section 2.2 "[Sub-grant Funding](#)." The proposal shall include a communications plan for informing award winners and recognizing them publicly with strategies agreed upon with USDA FNS. The cooperator shall also establish a method of transferring sub-grant funds to awardees.
- 6. Monitor sub-grantee progress and financial reports and provide technical assistance.** The cooperator shall provide fiscal oversight and exercise effective internal control of funds provided to sub-grantees; keep an inventory and record of sub-grantee expenditures for equipment (with a cost of \$5,000 or more); and monitor all sub-

grantee activity and financial progress. The cooperator shall also have experienced school nutrition staff or partners provide technical assistance to the sub-grantees to assist them in making changes to their school meals to qualify for a Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award. The cooperator shall describe plans for administering and managing sub-grants to awarded SFAs including:

- Application form submission and evaluation process
- Award process
- Allowable costs
- Support and technical assistance
- Timeline
- Monitoring progress
- Sub-grant reporting

- 7. Develop and implement (with USDA FNS approval) a plan for a communications campaign to promote the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants and encourage SFAs to apply.** The plan for this campaign shall detail how the cooperator will promote the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants to target audiences and motivate SFAs to apply for awards. For example, the cooperator shall create and publish informational materials and media, exhibit at appropriate nutrition conferences, and provide webinars to inform SFAs of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards and Sub-Grants. The cooperator shall share information about the recognition awards with State Child Nutrition agencies and key stakeholders. The cooperator must describe how they will collaborate with USDA FNS (following the rules and restrictions of the Office of the Chief Communications Officer – OCCO) on all aspects of this communications campaign.
- 8. Provide customer service and technical assistance to SFAs applying for recognition awards.** This shall involve staff members or partners with experience in school nutrition to provide training, technical assistance, and coaching to SFAs to understand and meet award criteria. Additionally, this shall include support for SFAs to submit an online application for recognition awards and how to resubmit applications for awards as needed. The cooperator shall provide a strategy for how they will provide SFAs with training and technical assistance and track all training and technical assistance provided throughout the period of performance.
- 9. Select recognition award winners using criteria provided by USDA FNS.** The cooperator shall use staff experienced in school nutrition to review applications from July 2023 through August 2025 and select award winners on a rolling basis using criteria provided by USDA FNS. USDA FNS anticipates providing up to 10 types of recognition awards. Over the 2-year application and award period, USDA FNS anticipates at least 1,000 SFAs will apply for at least one award. SFAs may receive awards in more than one category, but the cooperator must ensure that SFAs only receive each award once. The cooperator will provide a strategy for how they will select award winners, how they will communicate the outcomes, and provide technical assistance to unsuccessful award applicants so they can re-submit their application. The cooperator shall provide USDA FNS with information on the SFAs selected for award. USDA FNS will provide final approval of the award winners prior to the cooperator notifying SFAs on their award

status. The cooperator must notify SFAs of their award status (successful/unsuccessful) within two months of award submission.

**10. Develop non-monetary recognition awards and provide them to award winners.**

A non-monetary award (i.e., no cash awards or gift cards) strategy must include an innovative plan for informing award winners and recognizing them publicly with strategies agreed upon with USDA FNS. Non-monetary awards may include things such as digital badges, banners, certificates, video messages, etc. The non-monetary awards shall be consistent with the spirit of the promotion of healthy food and beverage choices, motivational and specific to the intent of the recognition awards activities described under this RFA and be of a nature that publicly displays the achievement of the SFA to the public for an extended period.

**11. Provide meeting planning services and travel support for the Healthy Meals Summits.**

At a minimum, the cooperator shall plan all aspects of the meeting, pay for the meeting space and services, secure hotel room blocks, and obtain audiovisual support for the summits. The cooperator shall issue meeting invitations (as approved by USDA FNS), develop all meeting materials and signage, and develop and disseminate the meeting program. Attendance at the summits shall be invitation only and USDA FNS shall approve the final list of invitees. The cooperator shall have professional photographs taken of the summit proceedings for USDA FNS use (and obtain and provide releases for the use of the photographs by USDA FNS). The cooperator shall provide stipends to Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients so that at least two representatives from each SFA may attend the event. The amount of the stipend shall cover all hotel, transportation costs and per diem. The cooperator shall consult with USDA FNS on the dates, times, and locations of the summits to allow for attendance by USDA policy officials. The cooperator shall plan a meeting program that includes methods for recognizing both the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients as well as School Food Systems Transformation Grant recipients. The meeting program shall also allow for breakout sessions for meeting attendees to present or share via roundtable discussions their best practices and strategies for increasing whole grains and reducing the sodium and added sugars content of school meals. Finally, the summits shall include speakers to motivate attendees and provide strategies for maintaining their successes.

**12. Collect and communicate best practices and success stories from SFAs.**

The cooperator shall propose a strategy to collect success stories and best practices from sub-grantee SFAs describing how they improved the sodium, added sugars, and whole grain content in school meals and how they were able to meet the criteria of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards. Success stories from other SFAs (i.e., non-sub-grantees) receiving recognition awards shall also be collected and communicated. The strategy must also include how success stories and best practices will be shared via web content, social media, and print materials.

**13. Spanish Language Services and Resources.**

The cooperator shall provide all materials for SFAs in Spanish as well as English. The cooperator must provide qualified, professional, experienced translators who possess a high level of translation skills and proficiency in both English and Spanish. The cooperator's translators must be United States citizens,

United States nationals, or permanent residents. Translators shall possess a minimum of two (2) years of experience translating in a professional setting. Further, the cooperator shall provide interpreters or bilingual staff to support training, coaching and technical assistance in Spanish to SFAs, as needed.

**14. Staffing.** The cooperator shall submit a staffing plan that identifies individuals who are designated as key staff for this grant. Key staff generally are identified as those individuals who:

- Assume a substantive responsibility for developing, modifying, and achieving project objectives;
- Are responsible for managing, administering, conducting, or providing oversight for a significant component of the project; and
- Have a direct bearing on the outcome of the project.

**Project Director**

Applicants are required to have a Project Director as key staff at one (1.0) full-time equivalent (FTE) for this cooperative agreement. At a minimum, the Project Director will be responsible for administration of the cooperative agreement, including fiscal management (including exercising effective internal controls), reporting to USDA FNS, and providing oversight for cooperative agreement activities. The application shall describe the qualifications of the Project Director. Their resume must demonstrate that they have the appropriate educational, technical, and experiential background for the proposed roles. The Project Director must have a four-year degree in nutrition/dietetics and experience in school nutrition and culturally diverse communities. Culinary experience is also preferred. Experience in managing a project similar in size and scope is highly desired.

**15. Cooperator Record Keeping, Reporting and Dissemination.** The cooperator is required to submit quarterly and final performance and financial status reports. The cooperator is required to utilize USDA FNS-developed reporting templates for progress reports. Refer to [Appendix C](#) for a copy of the FNS-908, Performance Progress Report, that will be required. The specific reporting format will be provided to the cooperator as a part of the Grant Terms and Conditions, and/or as part of grant orientation. The proposal must describe who will complete required progress and financial reports and how they will be submitted to USDA FNS. Additional information on reporting requirements can be found in section 6.3 "[Reporting Requirements.](#)" The cooperator must provide assurance that all records (including all SFA information, documentation, applications, etc.) will be securely stored and maintained for 3 years after the grant period of performance in accordance with Federal record keeping requirements. This is the time frame in which an audit could occur. The cooperator must also securely transfer all Federal records to USDA FNS at the end of the grant cooperative agreement period of performance.

**16. Meetings with USDA FNS.** The Project Director, at a minimum, is expected to attend a meeting at the USDA FNS National Office in Alexandria, VA at least three times during the period of performance of the cooperative agreement. During this meeting, the cooperator is expected to present their cooperative agreement progress and evaluation findings to USDA FNS staff and partners. The cooperator is also expected to provide a final report during the last year of the grant. This report will describe all activities implemented and funded under this cooperative agreement.

**Management Plan (within the 20 pages provided for the project narrative)**

Provide a clear description of the activities to be undertaken to manage the project to ensure that project activities are completed on time, within budget, and with quality results. Describe organizational structure and identify the staff and/or contractors who will manage the project. Describe roles and responsibilities of these employees or contractors, as well as relevant qualifications and experience, and a level of effort specified for specific staff proposed. Note any relevant experience in managing similar activities. Explain contingency plans for key staff, partners, and/or sub-grantee turnover. Include an organizational chart that indicates chain of command of all key project entities. Describe how quality assurance, recordkeeping, and accounting activities will be executed. Provide a clear description of how funds will be administered and distributed.

**Budget (no page limit)**

Provide a proposed budget describing appropriate use of grant funds and justifying costs. Refer to [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E - Cost Principals](#) when developing the budget. The budget must be submitted using the "Budget Information and Instruction Form" (SF-424A). Proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives. Include a total project budget and the amount requested from USDA FNS.

In addition to the budget submitted via the "Budget Information and Instruction Form" (SF-424A), the applicant's budget must also include line-item descriptions, formatted in a table with totals for each budget category, for every allowable cost and show how it supports the grant as well as briefly describe how the total amount for that line item was determined. If key partner(s) are receiving a portion of grant funds to provide essential services, please justify the organizations' participation in the project. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

**Budget Narrative (no page limit)**

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. More information about indirect cost rates is noted in the "Indirect Cost Rate" section below. All non-profit organizations must include their 501(c)(3) determination letter issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

The budget description must include all implementation and operational costs that are necessary to accomplish the activities outlined in this RFA. Specifically, describe how the cooperator will allocate its awarded amount to complete 1 through 16, under section 4.1 "[Content and Form of Application Submission \(Proposal Requirements\)](#)."

**Indirect Cost Rate**

A current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), negotiated with a Federal negotiating agency, should be used to charge indirect costs. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a NICRA is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If the applicant does not have, and has never been approved for a NICRA, they may charge up to 10% de minimis. In this instance, the applicant must indicate they are requesting the de minimis rate. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "none requested" should be stated in the budget narrative. For questions related to the indirect cost rate, please work with the Grant Officer as noted in section 7 "[Federal Awarding Agency Contacts](#)" of this RFA.

USDA FNS Grants Management has determined that excluding the portion of each sub-award in excess of \$25,000 from Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) is consistent with MTDC guidance in 2 CFR 200 related to managing subawards. Therefore, only the first \$25,000 of each sub-grant award (regardless of the period of performance) is subject to the indirect cost rate of the cooperative agreement cooperator.

**Activities/Indicators Tracker (no page limit)**

Proposed Activities and indicators measuring success must be mapped to [Key Objectives](#) (section 1.4) in the format below. Additional Activities/Indicators can be added as needed. Note: Indicators are defined as any metric the applicant anticipates tracking during the period of performance of the grant. Common examples include Number of People Attended, Number of People Impacted, Number of Conferences Delivered, Number of Materials Created, Number of Trainings, and Number of People Trained.

**(Examples)**

<b>Objective #1</b>	Develop, implement, and end a Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards initiative that recognizes SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP for meeting USDA FNS-established criteria for improving school meals.
<b>Activity (Example)</b>	Conduct usability testing of an online application form with sample of 10 school nutrition directors.
<b>Indicator(s) (Example)</b>	Percent of plan complete by key dates. Usability testing results.

<b>Objective #2</b>	Provide funding in the form of sub-grants and provide technical assistance to small and/or rural SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP to assist them in overcoming staffing, training, food purchasing, and equipment challenges to improving the nutritional quality of school meals and meet Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award criteria.
<b>Activity (Example)</b>	Review sub-grant applications against established criteria.
<b>Indicator(s)(Example)</b>	Percent of plan complete by key dates. Recommendation report to USDA FNS on which sub-grants to award.

<b>Objective #3</b>	Plan and implement two Healthy Meals Summits attended by Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients and School Food Systems Transformation Grant recipients.
<b>Activity (Example)</b>	Take photographs of Healthy Meals Summits sessions and activities.
<b>Indicator(s) (Example)</b>	Percent of plan complete by key dates. Photograph files and associated releases for use by USDA.

**Required Grant Application Forms**

Please refer to the [“Application Checklist”](#) for a list of required grant forms.

**Letter of Intent**

Applicants who intend to apply should submit a Letter of Intent (Attachment B) notice by October 21, 2022. This notice does not obligate the applicant to apply but provides USDA 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 e-mail to the USDA FNS Grant Officer

identified in section 7 “[Federal Awarding Agency Contacts](#).” Failure to submit a Letter of Intent does not deny any organization from submitting an application in response to this RFA.

## 4.2 Submission Date

Completed grant applications must be uploaded to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM EST, November 28, 2022.

1. Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Mailed, e-mailed or hand-delivered application packages will not be accepted. For further instructions, go to section 4.4 “[How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov](#).”
2. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
3. USDA FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via Grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline.
4. If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, USDA FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.

USDA FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration process at least **four weeks before the due date** and to submit applications to Grants.gov at least **one week before** the deadline to allow time to troubleshoot any issues, should they arise. Please note that upon submission, Grants.gov may send multiple confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was accepted. Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to Grants.gov should contact the Grant Officer noted in section 7 “[Federal Awarding Agency Contacts](#).” USDA FNS will evaluate submission issues on a case-by-case basis.

## 4.3 Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov

Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) and [SAM.gov](http://SAM.gov) in order to submit an application to USDA FNS via Grants.gov, as required. USDA FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration process at least **four weeks before the due date**.

In order to submit an application, you must:

1. Obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI)
  - a. Existing entities can find their UEI by following the steps here: [https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd\\_sp?id=kb\\_article\\_view&sysparm\\_article=KB0041254](https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0041254). New entities can get their UEI at SAM.gov and, if required, complete an entity registration.

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

2. Register in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov)
  - a. SAM combines Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance into one system. For additional information regarding SAM.gov, see the following link: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

- b. Access <https://www.sam.gov> and complete the online SAM registration process to obtain a UEI or verify if your organization already has one. If your organization already has a UEI, go to the next step.
  - c. To register, you must have your organization's UEI, entity's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on last tax return). **It may take up to 5–7 business days** or more to register and/or complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of an entity record.
  - d. Ensure you enter your E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) name and EBiz POC email in SAM, and that your organization/entity registration process is complete in SAM. This will allow you to register with Grants.gov (Step 3). Contact the Federal Support Help Desk at <https://www.fsd.gov/> for help with the UEI.
  - e. All applicants must have current SAM status at the time of application submission and throughout the duration of a Federal Award in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25.
  - f. We strongly encourage applicants to begin the process **at least 4 weeks** before the due date of the grant solicitation.
3. Create a Grants.gov Account:  
The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI to complete this process. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>.
  4. Authorize Grants.gov Roles:  
After creating an account on Grants.gov, the E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) receives an email notifying them of the registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will need to go to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. An approved Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must complete and submit the application online at Grants.gov. To learn more about the EBiz POC role and other profile roles, please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>.
  5. Track Role Status:  
To track your role request, please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>.

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

#### 4.4 How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov

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

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>



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

For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, please contact the Grant Officer noted in section 7 "[Federal Awarding Agency Contacts](#)."

#### 4.5 Grants.gov Receipt Requirement and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 PM EST on the due date listed on the cover page, as detailed in section 4.2 "[Submission Date](#)." Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

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

Applicants using slow internet speeds, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission of application materials could take some time before it is received by Grants.gov. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

Additional Information on Grants.gov and the Registration Process:

#### **NOTICE: Special Characters and Naming Conventions**

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

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

File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (examples: & – \* % / # ' -). This includes periods (.) and spacing followed by a dash in the file. To separate words in naming a file, use underscore, as in the following example: Attached\_File.pdf.

**Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected. USDA FNS will not accept any application rejected from [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) portal due to incorrect naming conventions.**

**Additional information and applicant resources are available at:**

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

## 4.6 Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is subject to the requirements of Executive Order (EO) 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” This Executive Order was issued with the desire to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on State and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The Order allows each State to designate an entity to perform this function.

If you are located within a State that does not have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC), you may send application materials directly to a Federal awarding agency.

For a list of State Agency contacts, please visit the Office of Management website at:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>.

## 5. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 5.1 Evaluation of Grant Application Criteria

#### 5.1.1 Review Criteria

USDA FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure the applicants are eligible entities.

#### 5.1.2 Evaluation Factors and Criteria

The following selection criteria and scoring will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA. The Project Narrative should demonstrate an understanding of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards, Sub-Grants for School Food Authorities, Healthy Meals Summits, and the [Key Objectives](#) (section 1.4) and [Eligibility Information](#) (section 3) of this RFA. Total possible points for scoring are 100 points, with up to 10 additional bonus points. Evaluation of the cooperative agreement application will be based on:

#### **1. Customer Service, Technical Assistance, and Application Review Approach (30 points)**

The applicant (or its sub-grantees or sub-contractors or partners) has the subject matter expertise and experience to provide customer service to SFAs on the website and online applications described under this RFA. The applicant (or its sub-grantees or sub-contractors or partners) also demonstrates extensive knowledge and experience in school nutrition services, foods available in the K–12 school food marketplace, school food procurement, and school food preparation techniques to review and evaluate SFA award and sub-grant applications and to assist SFAs in overcoming challenges to improving the nutritional quality of school meals. The proposed approach includes a plan to disseminate insights and findings from the technical assistance to inform other SFAs. The proposed approach provides a staffing level that will support the level of efforts and timelines outlined in the RFA. The proposed approach and staffing are adequate to support SFAs participating in the NSLP/SBP, in the 48 contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam or the United States Virgin Islands. This approach includes strategies for assisting SFAs with tribal schools and SFAs in small and/or rural areas. The proposed approach provides for customer service, technical assistance, and application review in Spanish and in a manner that is accessible for persons with disabilities.

#### **2. Marketing, Communications, and Event Planning (20 Points)**

The applicant (or its sub-grantees or sub-contractors or partners) has the expertise, experience, and network to develop a communications campaign to inform SFAs of the recognition awards and sub-grant opportunity and motivate SFAs to apply. The proposed approach reflects a knowledge and understanding of key motivators and communication channels utilized by SFAs and school nutrition professionals. The proposed approach presents innovative and creative strategies to recognize SFAs through non-monetary recognition strategies. Further, the applicant (or its sub-grantees or subcontractors or partners) has extensive experience in planning large meetings and conferences, including event planning and logistics.

### **3. Partnerships and Collaborations (10 Points)**

The applicant includes an approach that includes the use of partnerships and collaborations to achieve the objectives under this RFA. These partnerships and collaborations are documented by letters of commitment from the organizations. The partnerships and collaborators will support diverse and under-resourced SFAs in their approaches to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals. The approaches and collaborations will also help build support and interest in the recognition awards program and result in added recognition for SFAs achieving award criteria or will result in broader dissemination of success stories and best practices.

### **4. Staffing, Management Approach, and Quality Assurance (25 Points)**

The application provides a staffing plan that outlines the following details for each key staff position that must be filled during the course of the cooperative agreement: 1) position title; 2) a detailed position description with required qualifications, skills, and knowledge; 3) a description of specific roles and duties on the project, referencing the project narrative; 4) an anticipated date of hire; and 5) what arrangements will be made if the position is not filled in a timely manner. The application provides documentation of key staff necessary and their relevant education, skills, and experience for their proposed roles on the project.

The staffing plan shall document evidence that staff have expertise in school nutrition and meal pattern standards, culinary knowledge and skills, project management, financial management, and the management of grants and partnerships, including notable past experiences and grants. The plan shall provide sufficient and complete documentation that the time commitment of key staff is appropriate for their project roles; and demonstrate that partners or contractors, if any, have appropriate experience and commitment to effectively fulfill their proposed roles within the timeframe and financial constraints of the cooperative agreement. The applicant shall provide an organizational chart that indicates chain of command of all key project entities. The applicant explains contingency plans for key staff, partner, and/or sub-grantee turnover. **Note: letters of commitment are required from established partners in the application and serve as evidence of these commitments.**

The application provides a clear approach to providing the oversight necessary to ensure high-quality products, services, or outcomes and to keep the cooperative agreement on time and within budget. The proposed timeline is practical and includes all key milestones and deadlines in a manner that is realistic and achievable. The application demonstrates fiscal accountability and effective internal controls to ensure funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail for the cooperative agreement as well as sub-grants for SFAs. The application describes methods to monitor the quality, accessibility, and availability of customer service, technical assistance, and timely recognition award notifications and has systems in place to perform corrective actions if needed. The application includes procedures to ensure adequate collaboration with USDA FNS and allows for the required USDA FNS approvals as outlined in this RFA. The project narrative demonstrates adequate efforts to keep

Federal records secure and a secure method to provide those records to FNS at the end of the cooperative agreement

## 5. Budget (15 points)

The application provides a budget narrative describing how costs within the budget categories were derived and links between expenditures and specific activities/tasks. The applicant also provides documentation of all implementation and operational costs that are necessary to accomplish the objectives of this project. Specifically, the budget shows how the applicant will allocate its awarded amount to complete activities listed under section 4.1 "[Content and Form of Application Submission \(Proposal Requirements\)](#)." All costs in the budget are reasonable (e.g., the total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project).

## 6. Bonus Points (up to 5 additional points each)

- The application incorporates and describes how the chosen approach will affect a meaningful impact on racial equity and inclusion. This could be accomplished by demonstrating a relevant way to eliminate barriers while achieving the objectives of this cooperative agreement in reaching underserved or marginalized populations or communities.
- If grant funds are used to obtain the services of contractors, the application describes an approach to contract with businesses with economically or socially disadvantaged owners to achieve the objectives of this cooperative agreement.

### 5.1.3 *Review and Selection Process*

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

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

## 6. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 6.1 Federal Award Notice

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions, any contact from a USDA 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 USDA FNS' signed award document (FNS-529). Only the recognized USDA FNS authorized signature can bind the USDA FNS to the expenditure of funds related to an award's approved budget.

## 6.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

### 6.2.1 Confidentiality of an Application

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of USDA 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.

### 6.2.2 Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information

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

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

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

### 6.2.3 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.

#### 6.2.4 Administrative Regulations

##### **Federal Tax Liabilities Restrictions**

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

##### **Felony Crime Conviction Restrictions**

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

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

The entity 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 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 (CCR) 2 CFR Part 25**

Effective April 4, 2022, all grant applicants must obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) 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 UEI. To request a UEI, visit: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

The grant must also register its UEI in SAM.gov. If you were registered in the CCR database, your company’s information should be in SAM, and you will need to set up a SAM account. To register in SAM, you will need your entity’s UEI and your entity’s Tax ID Number (TIN) and taxpayer name (as it appears on your last tax return). Registration should take **3-5 days**. If you do not receive confirmation that your SAM registration is complete, please contact SAM.gov at: [https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd\\_sp](https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp).

USDA 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 UEI 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 UEI prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to grant recipients upon award.

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

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

#### **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, provides individuals with a right to access records in the possession of the Federal Government. The Government may withhold information pursuant to the nine exemptions and the three exclusions contained in the Act.

Application packages submitted in response to this grant solicitation may be subject to FOIA by requests by interested parties. In response to these requests, USDA FNS will comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including departmental regulations.

USDA FNS will forward a Business Submitter Notice to the requested applicant's point-of-contact. Applicants will need to review requested materials and submit any recommendations within 10 days from the date of USDA FNS notification. USDA FNS will redact Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

For additional information on the Freedom of Information (FOIA) process, please contact the USDA FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at [FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:FOIA@usda.gov).

#### **Privacy Policy**

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

#### *6.2.5 Code of Federal Regulations and Other Government Requirements*

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

#### **Government-wide Regulations**

- 2 CFR Part 25: “Universal Identifier and System for Award Management”
- 2 CFR Part 170: “Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information”
- 2 CFR Part 175: “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”
- 2 CFR Part 180: “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)”
- 2 CFR Part 200: “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 400: USDA’s implementing regulation of 2 CFR Part 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 415: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations”
- 2 CFR Part 416: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”
- 2 CFR Part 417: USDA “Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension”
- 2 CFR Part 418 USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- 7 CRR Part 16: “Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations”
- 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 (T&Cs) of USDA FNS grant awards may be obtained electronically in advance of an award. For a copy of T&Cs, please contact the Grant Officer noted in the [Agency Contacts](#) (Section 7) of this RFA.

## 6.3 Reporting Requirements

### 6.3.1 Financial Reports

The cooperator will be required to enter the SF-425 (Financial Status Report) into the USDA FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis. In order to access FPRS, the cooperator must obtain USDA e-authentication certification and access to FPRS. For additional information on FPRS, visit <https://fprs.fns.usda.gov/>.

### 6.3.2 Performance Progress Report (PPR)

The cooperator will be required to submit progress reports to USDA FNS 30 calendar days following the end of each quarter, using the FNS-908 PPR form that will be sent to the cooperator at the time of award or orientation. The reports should cover the preceding period of activity. A final report identifying the accomplishments and results of the project will be due 120 calendar days after the end date of the award. For reference, a sample of the PPR form can be found in [Appendix C](#).

**Please note:** the FNS-908 PPR form specific to this opportunity will be sent to the cooperator at the time of award. Use of the FNS-908 PPR form for progress reports is required.

### Quarterly Progress Reports

Quarterly progress reports must provide a description of the activities conducted during the reporting period, major accomplishments with quantitative data, difficulties encountered, solutions developed, and major planned activities for the following quarter and should be tied to the [Key Objectives](#) (section



1.4) and proposed activities provided in the application. Quarterly progress reports must provide the following information:

- A description of progress towards project goals and objectives as well as a description of marketing, trainings, technical assistance, and award-related activities that occurred during the quarter for sub-grants and recognition awards (including descriptions of approaches, methods, materials used, and reach).
- The total number of website views for the quarter and to date over the entirety of the period of performance for the cooperative agreement by page.
- For any training conducted, the total number of training participants and average hours of training delivered by topic (e.g., award application, specific award criteria, etc.).
- The number of sub-grant applications received to date.
- The number of sub-grant applications reviewed to date.
- The number of sub-grant applications recommended to USDA FNS for sub-grant award and a description of SFA characteristics (i.e., enrollment, size, percent of enrolled students that qualify for free or reduced-price meals, tribally-controlled schools, etc.).
- The number of sub-grantees that have applied for a recognition award and the number that have received a recognition award.
- The total number of recognition award applications received to date; the total number of recognition award applications under review; the number of recognition award applications that did not meet award criteria; the total number of SFAs recommended to USDA FNS for award (listed by the specific recognition award for which the SFA applied, USDA FNS region, State, and sub-grantee status).
- A summary of technical assistance provided and the topics on which technical assistance was needed.
- A summary and description of how partnering organization(s) are engaged (if applicable).
- A summary of any customer service or web hosting issues which interrupted the availability of the website and/or the submission of online applications, if applicable.
- A summary of the status of the distribution of funds (i.e., sub-grants, travel stipends) or non-monetary recognition awards to eligible SFAs.
- Budget impacts and deviations from the proposed plan.

### **Final Report**

Within 120 calendar days after the end of the period of performance for this cooperative agreement, the cooperator must electronically submit a final FNS-908 PPR form that compiles all information required in the quarterly progress reports. The cooperator shall also submit a written narrative report that includes, but is not limited to:

- A description of overall achievement in meeting project goals and objectives, as well as a description of marketing, trainings, technical assistance, and award-related activities that occurred during the entirety of the cooperative agreement for sub-grants and recognition awards (including descriptions of approaches, methods, materials used, and reach).
- The total number of website views to date over the entirety of the period of performance for the cooperative agreement by page.
- A synopsis of training and technical assistance provided throughout the period of performance of the cooperative agreement and key takeaways. Any trends in types of technical assistance needed shall be described.

- The total number of sub-grant applications submitted by SFAs (listed by USDA FNS region and State) and how many sub-grants were awarded, including the dollar amount and how the award was used to achieve recognition award criteria.
- The total number of recognition award applications received and reviewed; the number of recognition award applications that did not meet award criteria; and the total number of recognition awards approved (listed by the specific recognition award for which the SFA applied, USDA FNS region, State, and sub-grantee status).
- A list of the names of all SFAs that have received awards, the date of award and the award category (listed by the specific recognition award for which the SFA applied and received an award, USDA FNS region, State, and sub-grantee status). The cooperator shall also provide a list of the schools that SFAs used to achieve recognition award criteria.
- A summary and description of how partnering organization(s) were engaged (if applicable).
- Budget impacts and deviations from the proposed plan. Information regarding sub-grantee awards, including how funds were spent shall be described.
- A summary of recommendations and best practices gleaned from field experience throughout the duration of the cooperative agreement to inform USDA FNS' future technical assistance efforts.
- Discussion on how the findings from the cooperative agreement activities and its results can inform other SFAs seeking to enhance school meal quality, and the feasibility (both financially and administratively) of implementing it in other settings.

### **Final Deliverables**

The cooperator must electronically submit or transfer a set of final grant materials that are 508-compliant (e.g., training curricula, images, etc.) as part of their final report. Final grant materials that must be submitted include, but are not limited to:

- All recognition award application documents and review findings that must be retained by USDA FNS for Federal record keeping purposes.
- All sub-grant application documents and review findings that must be retained by USDA FNS for Federal record keeping purposes.
- Data export of recognition award recipients, including SFA name, address, State, zip code, awards given, month and year of award.
- Data export of all sub-grant awards, including SFA name, address, State, zip code, and award amount.
- All technical assistance materials (tip sheets, fact sheets, etc.) created with funds from this cooperative agreement as design files.
- All webpages created throughout this cooperative agreement and data/analytics.
- All word files that capture success stories from activities that took place over the entirety of the cooperative agreement.
- All illustrations, graphics, fonts, or other files for professional printing, social media, and web posting in JPEG, PDF and/or TIFF format.
- All photos and releases that state that FNS has royalty-free, unlimited rights to the use and printing of any photographs, graphics, and custom illustrations.

### **Other Deliverables**

- **Monthly:** The cooperator shall provide a list of the names and addresses of SFAs that have received recognition awards to date, the date of award, and the award category (listed by the specific recognition award for which the SFA applied and received an award, USDA FNS region,

State, and sub-grantee status). The cooperator shall also provide a list of the schools that SFAs used to achieve recognition award criteria.

- **Within 60 days after a Healthy Meals Summit:** The cooperator shall provide a report of summit proceedings, including the total number of attendees, number of SFAs recognized, number of School Food Systems Transformation Grantees recognized, key outcomes and best practices from sharing sessions, fiscal information on the travel stipends provided to recognition award recipients, and photographs and appropriate releases of the summit activities.

## 7. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

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

Anna Arrowsmith

Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division

U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS

1320 Braddock Place, Suite 620

Alexandria, VA 22314

E-mail: [anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov](mailto:anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov)

## 8. OTHER INFORMATION

### 8.1 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. USDA FNS reserves the right to provide this debriefing orally or in written format.

### 8.2 Data Collection and Ownership

Any data, electronic files, or webpages developed or created from this Initiative are the property of USDA FNS. At the end of the cooperative agreement, all materials, data, electronic files, or webpages will be the property of USDA FNS and must be securely transmitted to USDA FNS. The cooperator shall provide USDA FNS with appropriate releases for all photographs, images, and other materials as directed, giving USDA sole ownership with unlimited rights to the use of the materials, including the right to redistribute, use, and print items without restriction.

## APPENDIX A: RFA Budget Narrative Checklist

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

This checklist will assist you in completing the budget narrative portion of the application. Please review the checklist to ensure the items below are addressed in the budget narrative.

**NOTE:** The budget and budget narrative, as well as forms SF-424 and SF-424A must be in line with the proposal project description (statement of work) bona fide need. USDA FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

ITEM	YES	NO
<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 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, an excerpt from travel regulations is included 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> (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.		

ITEM	YES	NO
<b>Other</b>		
<p>Consultant Services –            Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost shown on the budget? The following information must be provided in the justification: description of service, the consultant’s name and an itemized list of all direct cost and fees, number of personnel including the position title (specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the costs), number of estimated hours and hourly wages per hour, and all expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project.</p>		
<p>For all other line items listed under the “Other” heading –            List all items to be covered within “Other” along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.</p>		
<b>Indirect Costs</b>		
<p>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.</p>		
<p>2 CFR 200 allows any non-Federal entity (NFE) that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate to charge a de minimis rate of <b>10%</b> of modified total direct costs (MTDC), which the NFE may use indefinitely as a Federally-negotiated rate.</p>		

## APPENDIX B: FNS-906 Grant Program Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire – For Reference Only

### PURPOSE

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

### ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

**Legal Organization Name:**

**Unique Entity ID (SAM):**

### FINANCIAL STABILITY AND QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Requirement	Yes	No
1. Has your organization received a Federal award within the past 3 years?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does your organization utilize accounting software to manage your financial records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Does your accounting system identify the receipt and expenditure of program funds separately for each grant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does your organization have a dedicated individual responsible for monitoring organizational funds, such as an accountant or a finance manager?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does your organization separate the duties for staff handling the approval of transactions and the recording and payment of funds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Does your organization have the ability to specifically identify and allocate employee effort to an applicable program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does your organization have a property /inventory management system in place to track location and value of equipment purchased under the award?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

AUDIT REPORT AND FINDINGS		
Requirement	Yes	No
1. Has your organization been audited within the last 5 fiscal years? <i>(If the answer is "Yes" and this report was issued under the Single Audit Act please note this in the box below marked "Additional Information" and if not issued under the "Single Audit Act", please attach a copy or provide a link to the audit report in the Hyperlink space below).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Qualified Opinion" or an "Adverse Opinion"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Material Weakness" disclosed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If your organization has been audited within the last 5 fiscal years, was there a "Significant Deficiency" disclosed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Hyperlink (if available):</b>		
<b>Additional information including expanding on responses in previous sections:</b>		

**APPLICANT CERTIFICATION**

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

Signature of Authorized Representative	Date
Name of Authorized Representative: _____	
Phone Number: _____	
Email: _____	

## APPENDIX C: FNS-908 Performance Progress Report (PPR) – For Reference Only

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

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

Print	Submit by Email	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Food and Nutrition Service	OMB Number: 0584-0512 Expiration Date: 7/31/2022
<b>PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT</b>			Management Settings
Recommended File Name: FNS908_{Organization Name}_{Type of Report}_{Reporting Fiscal Year}_{Period}_{Original Revision}.pdf <i>Copy value then paste in Save As dialog when saving</i>			
<p>The public burden statement: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-0512*). Do not return the completed form to this address.</p>			
<b>1. Recipient Organization</b>		<b>2. Program Information:</b>	
a. Organization Name:		Program Area:	
b. Street Address:		Federal Fiscal Year of Award:	
City:		Program:	
State:		Tag:	
Zip:		<b>4. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN):</b>	
<b>3. Primary POC:</b>		<b>5. Type of Report (Select One):</b>	
a. First Name:	Last Name:	Quarterly   Semi-Annual   Final	
b. Title:		Reporting Fiscal Year:	
c. Telephone (Area Code & Number):		Period:	
d. Email Address:		Original/Revision:	
<b>6. Federal Grant Agreement Number:</b>			
<b>7. Additional POC (Optional)</b>			
a. First Name:		b. Title:	
Last Name:			
c. Telephone (Area Code & Number):		d. Email Address:	
<b>8. Report Submitted By:</b>			
a. First Name:		b. Title:	
Last Name:			
		<b>9. Certification</b>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> I certify by checking this box that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this report is correct and complete for performance of activities set forth in the award documents.	
<b>10. Date Report Submitted:</b>			



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

Program Management Information	
<b>1. Progress Summary</b>	
Provide summary of progress this reporting period, highlighting your greatest achievements and challenges to date in this reporting period. For challenges, how did you resolve or overcome them? (Max 2000 characters):	
<b>2. Personnel Information</b>	
a. Number of FTEs: <input type="text"/>	b. Were there any changes in key personnel? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
c. If yes, please describe the changes in key personnel, including the individual leaving/joining the project as well as the name and contact information (email address, phone number, and name of organization) of the individual. Note: This information does not serve as a formal request to approve the change in key personnel. This request must be forwarded to the Grants Officer in a separate request (Max 2000 Characters):	
<b>3. Projected Amendments (Cost and No-Cost)</b>	
a. Number of amendments projected this upcoming quarter? <input type="text"/>	b. Do the projected amendment(s) require FNS approval? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
c. Please describe the type of amendment(s) projected and justification for each. Note: This information does not serve as a formal request to approve amendments. This request must be forwarded to the Grants Officer in a separate request (Max 2000 characters):	
<b>4. Expenditures/Purchases:</b>	
a. Were there any significant expenditures or purchases, including any contracts entered during this reporting period? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	b. If so, please describe (Max 2000 Characters):
<b>5. Deviations (Changes this quarter outside of the agreed upon budget, timeline, or scope):</b>	
a. Have there been any deviations? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	b. Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Budget <input type="checkbox"/> Timeline <input type="checkbox"/> Scope <input type="checkbox"/> Other
c. Describe any deviation(s), including a justification and impacts to budget/timeline (Max 2000 characters):	
d. Please describe proposed activities to mitigate the impact of the deviation(s) (Max 2000 characters):	

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

Program Management Information (Continued)	
<b>6. Upcoming Activities and Anticipated Changes</b> a. Please describe activities planned for next quarter (Max 2000 Characters): <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div> b. Do you anticipate any changes in your project timeline, activities or cost? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No c. If yes, please explain the anticipated changes (Max 2000 Characters): <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	
<b>7. Final Reporting Summary (Final Reporting Period Only)</b> a. Are all goals and objectives completed at this time? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No b. If no to answer 7a, briefly describe the goals and objectives that were not completed and why they were not completed (Max 2000 Characters): <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div> c. Was the project budget sufficient for meeting the project goals? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No d. If no to answer 7c, briefly describe why the budget was insufficient for meeting the project goals (Max 2000 Characters): <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	
<b>8. Additional Comments (Max 2000 Characters)</b> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	

**Instructions:** Complete this section by adding all Activities and Indicators as listed on your submitted proposal for each listed objective. For each reporting period, update these Activities/Indicators with the most up to date information. **Note:** Objectives will be added by FNS and should not be altered. Additionally, note that indicator values vary by Indicator Type selected.

Program Activities								
Objective 1								
- +	1	Activity	Type	Anticipated Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Optional		
						Location	Beneficiaries/Audience	Topic (if training)
		Indicator Description	Indicator Type	Target	Actual (Cumulative)	Comments		
- +	1							
		Add Objective		Remove Objective				