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Development and Implementation of Healthy Meals Incentives School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants – Cooperative Agreement

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications (RFA)

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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, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0512). Do not return the completed form to this address.

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APPLICATION CHECKLIST

This Application Checklist provides applicants with a list of the required documents. However, USDA FNS 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 and all necessary attachments, including the cover page ([Appendix C](#)).

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 grant.
- The percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- Your organization’s fringe benefit rate and amount, as well as the basis for the computation.
- The type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds.
- Itemized travel expenses (including type of travel), objectives, travel justifications, and basis for lodging estimates.
- Types of equipment and supplies, justifications, and estimates.
- 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 and Financial Capability Questionnaire ([Appendix B](#))
- [Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement](#) (PDF - Upload using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15)

DEFINITIONS

Below are definitions for terms within this RFA. Additional grantmaking definitions are contained at 2 CFR 200.1

Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA): The Dietary Guidelines for Americans is the cornerstone of Federal nutrition policy and nutrition education activities, providing food-based recommendations to promote health, help prevent diet-related disease, and meet nutrient needs. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Agriculture (USDA) jointly publish the Dietary Guidelines every 5 years.

Economically or Socially Disadvantaged: 1) Small businesses owned by individuals that have faced barriers to access to the capital, markets, and networks they need to grow their businesses because of certain statuses or membership in certain groups, including membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society and; 2) Small businesses in Community Development Financial Institution Investment Areas, which are generally low-income, high-poverty geographies that receive insufficient support for the needs of small businesses, including minority-owned businesses.

Food Industry: Food industry is a network of agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, marketing, wholesale and food distribution, foodservice, farmers and retail markets, regulatory, education, research and development, and financial services.

Food System: Sum of the actors and their interactions in the supply chain that includes the procurement, production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food products.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): A document published to reflect an estimate of indirect cost rate negotiated between the Federal Government and a Grantee/Contractor's organization which reflects the indirect costs (facilities and administrative costs) & fringe benefit expenses incurred by the organization.

Non-governmental Entity: An organization not belonging to or associated with any government. Examples include, but are not limited to, accredited colleges/universities, private or public non-profits, or for-profit entities.

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: A school food authority in which the majority of students are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41 (Rural-Fringe), 42 (Rural-Distant), or 43 (Rural-Remote) according to the [National Center for Education Statistics locale classification tool](#).

System for Award Management (SAM): The official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry (CCR), Federal Agency Registration (FedReg), Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA), and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS).

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 Federal school meal programs therein or is otherwise approved by USDA FNS to operate Federal school meal programs.

School Meal: A meal that qualifies for reimbursement with Federal funds because it has met USDA menu requirements and nutrition standards for school meal programs (e.g., National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, collectively referred to as the Program).

Small School Food Authority: A school food authority 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 the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and local Program operators, ensuring the Programs are managed according to Federal requirements. State agencies facilitate communication between the Program operators and USDA FNS, 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 provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity.

Underserved communities: refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): UEI is 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov.

1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Background

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) (collectively referred to as the Program) are Federally assisted nutrition programs operating in public and nonprofit 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 agriculture or education agencies (State agencies), which operate the Program through agreements with School Food Authorities (SFA). 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. In February 2022, USDA published the [Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Final Rule](#) (Transitional Standards). This rule gives schools time to transition from COVID-19 pandemic operations toward more nutritious meals that align with the 2020–2025 DGAs, before updated school meal patterns are established for school year (SY) 2024–2025 and beyond. The Transitional Standards began for SY 2022–2023 and will continue through SY 2023–2024.

Recently, supply chain issues caused by COVID-19 have negatively impacted school meal programs along with the rest of the nation's food supply. As school meal programs move forward in implementing the Transitional Standards and look forward to updated school meal patterns in SY 2024–2025, it is critical that we facilitate a ready supply of nutritious and tasty school food products consistent with school meal regulations and guidance, as well as the current DGAs.

In June of 2022, the USDA launched the [Food System Transformation](#) framework which aims to build a more resilient food supply chain, create a fairer food system, and make nutritious food more accessible and affordable for consumers, with a particular focus on equity. Under this RFA, the *School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grant Cooperative Agreement* will reflect FNS' commitment to encourage the offering of healthier food products in the marketplace for school meals through engagement with the food industry and incentivizing innovation and partnerships. Increasing access to nutritious and appealing foods for kids is critical to the success of strong school meal standards. The selected Cooperator(s) will collaborate with food industry partners to support school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and community partners.

The goal of this RFA is to select a Cooperator or Cooperators who will implement and manage the *School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants*. The *Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards for SFAs*, the *Healthy Meals Incentives Sub-Grants for Small and/or Rural SFAs*, and the *Healthy Meals Summits* were released under another RFA and are not included herein.

The *School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants* described in this RFA were created to focus efforts to stimulate innovation in strengthening the availability of and access to nutritious food products in the K-12 school food marketplace. In addition, these sub-grants will support a more resilient food system through expanding manufacturing and purchasing capacity at the local and regional level. This, in turn, increases equitable access to healthy food products both in schools and in communities by way of support for agricultural producers, growers, and processors impacted by COVID-19.

As noted above, in June of 2022, the USDA launched the [Food System Transformation](#) framework which aims to build a more resilient food supply chain, create a fairer food system, and make nutritious food more accessible and affordable for consumers, with a particular focus on equity. USDA FNS has established the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through food system transformation. This initiative consists of four key activities:

1. **The School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants** will support collaborative projects between school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and/or community partners to stimulate innovation in strengthening the availability of and access to nutritious food products in the K-12 school food marketplace.
2. **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.
3. **The Healthy Meals Incentives Sub-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.
4. **The Healthy Meals Summits** will convene Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients and School Food System Transformation Challenge sub-grantees to be recognized, share best practices, and discuss strategies for sustaining their achievements into the future.

Pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Section 751, Subtitle B, the incentives Initiative 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 stakeholder and food industry participation in developing solutions to benefit agricultural producers that supply food products, thus improving the school food system. This will contribute towards improving SFAs' access to nutritious agricultural commodities through food system transformation. The subgrants will provide a collection and sharing of best practices regarding innovative approaches to provide and enhance the school food system to ensure the sustainability of the collaborative efforts.

Applicants to this RFA should be familiar with the goals of the activities associated with the initiatives, specifically activity #1 above, when responding to the RFA.

1.2 Description of School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants Cooperative Agreement

As part of the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, USDA FNS will award up to four (4) cooperative agreements to non-governmental entities, i.e., any organization not belonging to or associated with any government. Examples include, but are not limited to, accredited colleges/universities, private or public non-profits, or for-profit entities, who will in turn offer and manage competitive School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants (i.e., sub-grants under FNS' cooperative agreement with the Cooperator(s)) to support collaborative projects with non-governmental entities, SFAs, and the food industry. The applicants for this RFA should outline their approach for how they plan to assist the subgrantees on their efforts to improve the K-12 school food supply chain and for implementing the sub-grants in a manner that incentivizes innovation and collaboration. If chosen, the grantee(s) will be responsible for overseeing the sub-grants. Sub-grant awardees will test new approaches for the improvement of the K-12 food system and establish and/or strengthen partnerships between various entities of the food system, including food industry, to create a sustainable, resilient, equitable, and nutritious school food system. This will assist SFAs in transitioning from meal service flexibilities implemented as part of the COVID-19 public health emergency and empower producers and manufacturers to offer products to assist SFAs in this undertaking.

The Cooperator(s) will score the *School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grant* applications based upon the scale of the potential effect on the school food K-12 marketplace; contribution towards improving the nutritional profile of school foods as well as foods marketed for children in the retail marketplace; and contribution towards increasing the availability of and access to nutritious foods both in schools and in communities by way of support from the food industry. Items 1 and 2 below (supporting underserved communities and economically or socially disadvantaged businesses) shall also be considered by Cooperator(s) in the assessment of subgrantee applications. Cooperator(s), challenge sub-grant recipients, and their partners will attend a national Healthy Meals Summit where USDA FNS will recognize them for their progress toward improving the school food system. USDA FNS and the Cooperator(s) will also highlight challenge sub-grant activities and food industry contributions through their internal communication channels such as press releases, blogs, website features, and social media channels. Scoring Criteria is outlined in [Section 5.2: "Evaluation Criteria."](#)

Up to ten (10) bonus points will be given to cooperative agreement applicants that:

1. demonstrate that their chosen approach is intended to result in a meaningful impact through collaborative efforts with the food industry on racial equity and inclusion by supporting underserved communities' access to healthy school foods; and/or,
2. indicate a plan to contract or partner with businesses with economically or socially disadvantaged owners to achieve the objectives.

The anticipated period of performance for this agreement will be March 2023 to December 31, 2028. USDA anticipates awarding **up to \$50 million** in grant funding to potentially fund up to four (4) Cooperator(s) to carry out the activities under the Development and Implementation of School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants Cooperative Agreement RFA. Activities to be conducted under this cooperative agreement can be found under [Section 1: "Program Description and Objectives"](#) and [Section 2: "Awards Information."](#)

1.3 Legislative Authority

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 therefore benefit the producers that supply SFAs with these products.

Other Application Directives: Pursuant to Federal regulations at 5 CFR part 1320, information being collected through this cooperative agreement is subject to Office of Budget and Management (OMB) approval prior to the collection of this information. USDA FNS will develop the sub-grant application forms in partnership with the Cooperator(s) and will submit them to OMB for approval. This Cooperator(s) shall use these 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](#), the cooperative agreement(s) should take a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for the delivery of activities relating to project activities, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and/or 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 Program Objectives of this cooperative agreement. Proposed activities should be clearly aligned to these key objectives and the [cooperator requirements](#) described in [Section 2.4: “Project Roles and Responsibilities.”](#)

	Objectives
1	Finalize the proposed plan for structuring the sub-grants and the process for selecting sub-grantees that will demonstrate innovative solutions for improvement of the K-12 food system.
2	Ensure SFAs, non-governmental entities, non-profit organizations, and food industry representatives are aware of the opportunity to receive challenge sub-grant funding to improve the K-12 food system.
3	Award sub-grants and track and monitor sub-grantee progress toward grant activities and performance measures via an online system.
4	Provide training and technical assistance (TA) to sub-grantees to ensure successful completion of funded activities.
5	Develop a plan to ensure activities and/or products are sustainable beyond the grant performance period.
6	Collect process and outcome data from sub-grantees and provide status reports to FNS on sub-grantee progress toward their goals and objectives.
7	Collect and disseminate best practices and success stories regarding partnerships with food industry members, food product development, marketing to and acceptance of products among SFAs, and student satisfaction with new products.

2. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 Award Overview

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

1. Total amount of funding expected to award: \$50 million
2. Anticipated number of Federal awards: No more than 4
3. Anticipated award announcement date: March 2023
4. Expected amounts of individual Federal awards: This amount will depend on the number of awards made. Total award amount will not exceed \$50 million.
5. Anticipated start date and period of performance: March 2023 – December 31, 2028
6. Anticipated amounts and/or numbers of individual awards: No more than 4 awards; FNS anticipates no less than \$12.5 million per award.
7. Estimated funding per award: This amount will depend on the number of awards made. Total award amount for any award cannot exceed \$50 million.
8. Informational webinars: November 17, 2022 and December 7, 2022
9. Letter of Intent due date (Optional): January 9, 2023
10. Application due date: February 1, 2023

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 cooperative agreements during the current or the subsequent fiscal year, should additional funds become available.

2.2 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(s). This cooperative agreement is a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the Federal government and the Cooperator(s). The roles and responsibilities of both the Cooperator(s) and USDA FNS will be stated in the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement ([see Section 6: “Federal Award Administration Information”](#)). USDA FNS substantial involvement in this agreement is outlined in the cooperator requirements described in [Section 2.4: “Project Roles and Responsibilities.”](#)

Approximately \$50 million in Federal funding is available 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 5.2: “Evaluation Criteria.”](#) Applicants are expected to propose a budget that represents judicious administrative expenses, with most of the funds being redirected to the sub-grantees. Amounts to be awarded to sub-grantees will be dependent upon FNS approval of the approach chosen by the Cooperator(s). Cooperator(s) should demonstrate fiscal responsibility and provide clear justification for administrative costs such that the maximum amount possible is redirected to the sub-grantees. This should be justified within the project narrative and budget documents.

Funds will be made available to the Cooperator(s) at the start of the cooperative agreement and the Cooperator(s) will draw down funds as needed to effectively implement the cooperative agreement. Funds will be available to the Cooperator(s) after the start of the performance period and in advance of need. Quarterly and annual financial reporting will be required.

2.3 Sub-grant Funding

1. FNS reserves the right to reallocate unused sub-grant funds if less than the full amount of sub-grant funding is awarded.
2. Sub-grants may be awarded to entities such as school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and/or community partners, who will work with a variety of partners including, but not limited to, other school districts, non-profit organizations, and food industry representatives.
3. Sub-grantees include: school districts, food producers, suppliers, and distributors, and community partners from the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.

2.4 Project Roles and Responsibilities

USDA FNS has structured this award as a cooperative agreement; therefore, the Cooperator(s) can expect substantial collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in the management of the project by USDA FNS. USDA FNS will provide TA and consultation to the Cooperator(s) to support the implementation, evaluation, and communication and dissemination of the cooperative agreement activities from March 2023 through December 31, 2028. USDA FNS will provide advice and comments on all aspects of the project proposal in advance of implementation and in a manner and timeframe agreed upon between the Cooperator(s) and USDA FNS.

At the discretion of USDA FNS, substantial involvement with the Cooperator(s) will include, 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 the determination of appropriate systems, processes, activities, and timelines, to achieve project outcomes.

4. Approving the RFA for sub-grants, including eligible awardees and allowable and unallowable costs.
5. Consulting on the development of websites and online applications.
6. Collaborating on the development and implementation of the communications campaign to promote subgrants to eligible applicants.
7. Providing technical input to the Cooperator(s) to assist sub-grantees in applying for sub-grants.
8. Providing approval of the selection of sub-grant awardees.
9. Approving all uses of the USDA logo.
10. Assisting in the development of a strategy to inform sub-grantees of their awards and promote the sub-grantees and their partners publicly.
11. Collaborating with the Cooperator(s) to provide training and TA to sub-grantees.
12. Disseminating best practices and success stories regarding partnerships with food industry members, food product development, marketing to and acceptance of products among SFAs, and student satisfaction with new products.
13. Collaborating with the Cooperator(s) to revise or rescope plans to reflect project needs, activities, and/or opportunities, and challenges in the project.

The Cooperator(s) has overall responsibility for planning, implementing, and operating all aspects of the project. The Cooperator(s) is responsible for:

1. Selecting and/or hiring personnel to manage and operate the project.
2. Conducting training and providing necessary support for staff and other partners to successfully handle project responsibilities.
3. Ensuring staff, partners, contractors, and sub-grantees fulfill their responsibilities and provide deliverables in the appropriate timeframe.
4. Keeping USDA FNS informed on critical junctures and checkpoints after award of cooperative agreement, including management plan, budget plan, award plans, training and TA plans, and design and implementation plans.
5. Developing a data tracking/evaluation plan that will include metrics to measure success of the project as described in the approved project narrative, as well as the success of the sub-grantees.
6. Ensuring that all aspects of any websites, including online application forms, and digital or published materials, comply with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (<https://www.section508.gov>).
7. Ensuring that appropriate non-discrimination (EEO statement) language is 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.
8. Providing reasonable accommodation and auxiliary aids and services for all webinars, videos, and other materials intended for the public, such as providing captioning services to enable equitable participation for individuals with disabilities.
9. Promoting, awarding, and managing sub-grants via an online system.
10. Ensuring that all application materials are available in, at a minimum, both English and Spanish.
11. Recommending applicants for sub-grant awards (all awards are subject to approval by FNS).
12. Providing language assistance and translation services, such as interpreters or bilingual staff, as needed, to support training, TA, and materials for sub-grantees.
13. Ensuring use of the USDA logo has USDA approval and is in accordance with the USDA Style Guide available at <https://www.usda.gov/style-guide/logo>.
14. Attending progress meetings via teleconference or in-person, as required by USDA FNS. During these meetings, the Cooperator(s) is expected to present their cooperative agreement progress and findings to USDA FNS staff and partners.
15. Hosting (tentatively) USDA officials for a site visit during their grant award period. All costs associated with the site visit will be paid for by USDA and are not expected to be included in grant budgets.
16. Planning and hosting up to one (1) site visit to each sub-grantee for the Project Director or other key personnel to attend. All costs associated with the sub-grantee site visit will be paid for by the Cooperator(s) and should be included in grant budgets.

17. Collecting and disseminating best practices and success stories regarding partnerships with food industry members, food product development, marketing to and acceptance of products among SFAs, and student satisfaction with new products.
18. Accounting for project funds separately from all other funds and establishing financial and management reporting and controls to assure that project funds are not commingled or used inappropriately. A separate and distinct audit trail must be established and maintained for the expenditure of project funds that clearly demonstrates that they are used solely for project purposes.
19. Keeping all sub-grant applications and associated documents secure in accordance with Federal record keeping requirements for three (3) years after the period of performance ends. The Cooperator(s) shall transfer these records to USDA FNS upon the end of the cooperative agreement.
20. Collaborating with other Cooperator(s) to ensure that entities are not awarded sub-grant funds for duplicative projects from multiple Cooperator(s).
21. Providing quarterly and annual financial and progress reports that describe all activities implemented and funded under this cooperative agreement.
22. Collaborating with USDA FNS and other Cooperator(s) funded under this RFA.
23. Ensuring that activities and/or products are sustainable beyond the grant performance period.

2.5 Award Period and Project Timeline

All funds and activities under the cooperative agreement must be obligated and completed by December 31, 2028. Key dates and timeline considerations that the Cooperator(s) shall meet under this RFA include the following:

- **September 1, 2023 – August 30, 2026:** Sub-grant applicants will submit proposals and corresponding documentation.
- **September 1, 2026 - December 15, 2028:** Cooperator(s) and sub-grantees shall submit all necessary closing documents required under the Cooperative Agreement. Sub-grantees shall submit all necessary closing documents to the Cooperator(s) by October 1, 2028.
- **Within two months of application submission:** The Cooperator(s) shall review sub-grantee proposals and associated documentation against award criteria created in collaboration with USDA FNS. This review may occur on a rolling basis and the Cooperator(s) will inform applicants the status of their application. USDA FNS shall approve the list of awardees prior to this notification.

2.6 Letter of Intent (Optional)

A Letter of Intent (LOI) ([Appendix D](#)) is optional but provides USDA FNS with useful information in preparing for the review and selection process. If the eligible applicant wants to submit a LOI, it should be received by **January 9, 2023**. The LOI does not obligate the applicant to apply. The LOI should include the potential applicant's name and address, entity'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 FNS Grant Officer identified in [Section 7: "Federal Awarding Agency Contacts."](#)

2.7 Informational Webinar

An informational webinar will be held for potential applicants on **November 17, 2022**, with a repeat of the webinar on **December 7, 2022**. Interested entities may plan to attend the webinar to learn more about the RFA and ask questions. All questions posted via email or on the webinar will be posted in a Q&A document and made available publicly.

2.8 Cooperator Requirements

The Cooperator(s) and/or their partners must have experience working with school districts, food producers, suppliers, and distributors, and/or community partners. The Cooperator(s) and/or its partners must demonstrate expertise in school foodservice and in working with school nutrition professionals to improve the nutritional quality of school meals.

Note: Any conflict of interest identified by the Cooperator(s) related to the partners or a specific staff member

must be reported to USDA FNS. See [Section 3.4: “Conflict of Interest”](#) for additional details.

2.9 Allowable Costs

All requested costs must be allowable, allocable, necessary, and reasonable in accordance with the OMB CFR 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.”

All costs must be necessary to carry out the project. Among other costs, budgets may include expenses related to supplies, personnel, technology, marketing and promotion, training and TA, travel and meetings, and sub-grants. All budget amounts should be in whole dollars.

Allowable costs include:

Supplies and Equipment:

These expenditures must be reasonable and necessary to perform the grant project.

Expenditures for both equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more) and supplies are allowable expenses. All equipment over \$5,000 has additional reporting and disposition requirements. Please see the regulations found at [2 CFR §200.313](#) and confirm that you are willing and able to meet the additional requirements.

Personnel Costs

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

Technology

- Procurement of technology (e.g., both hardware and software such as tablets, laptops, display boards) necessary to implement grant activities). These purchases may require FNS approval.
- The development and maintenance of a website/portal and online sub-grant application.

Marketing and Promotion

- Printing, duplication, and distribution of marketing materials to promote the sub-grants.
- Development and distribution of best practices and success story resources via the internet and social media.
- Justified costs for developing and translating materials or adapting them to different formats.

Training and Technical Assistance (TA)

- Costs incurred in the delivery of training and TA to sub-grantees.
- Printing, duplication, storage, and distribution of marketing, TA, and training materials.
- Costs for adapting materials into languages other than English and accessible formats (i.e., compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (<https://www.section508.gov>)).
- Costs of exhibiting at conferences attended by School Nutrition Directors for the purposes of promoting the Healthy Meals Incentives School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants is an allowable cost.

Travel:

- Travel as needed/justified using the per diem rates established in 41 CFR Part 301.
- Travel for the Cooperator(s) and sub-grantees to attend the Healthy Meals Summit.

3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible entities include public or private colleges and universities; non-profit or for-profit research organizations/institutions; entities with experience working with school nutrition professionals and/or the school food service industry to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. All applicants and/or its partners must have demonstrated experience in awarding and managing grants or sub-grants. Schools and school districts are **not** eligible entities for this award.

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 only accept one application for this RFA from each applicant. Suspended or debarred entities are ineligible to submit applications in response to this solicitation.

3.4 Conflict of Interest

If any conflicts of interest are identified by the applicant (related to the entity 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 should be provided. A conflict of interest may be a situation in which the applicant may gain personal or professional benefit through this cooperative agreement or have 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 and Financial Capability Questionnaire ([Appendix B](#)) that allows USDA FNS to evaluate aspects of the applicant's financial stability, quality of management systems, history of performance, and 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 Publication and Acknowledgement of USDA Support

As outlined in 2 CFR 415.2, cooperative agreement and sub-grant recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA FNS support on any publications written or published with USDA 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 product which is produced with USDA 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(s) must follow the [USDA Style Guide](#) when using the USDA logo.
2. Cooperator(s) will be in close communication with USDA FNS throughout the cooperative agreement period of performance and receive approvals for any publications or web material written or published with grant support.

4. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 Content and Form of Application Submission

To apply for this opportunity, the applicant is required to develop a project proposal to administer and manage the Development and Implementation of School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants Cooperative Agreement. The project proposal must include activities consistent with [Section 1.4: "Key Objectives"](#) and must address all requirements outlined in this RFA.

USDA FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this cooperative agreement to adhere to the following application format. The application should be presented as an 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 should be captured on no more than 20 pages. The cover page, table of contents, executive summary, applicant information, budget, budget narrative, and appendices (including, at a minimum, key staff resumes, organizational chart, activities/indicators, a minimum of three (3) required Letters of Support (LOS) and required forms) are not included in the 20-page limit. All pages, excluding the form pages, must be numbered.

Special Instructions:

1. Late application submissions 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.
2. Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, and/or certifications will not be considered.
3. Applications missing a written proposal or budget narrative will not be considered.
4. USDA FNS reserves the right to request clarification on any application submitted in response to this solicitation.
5. Applications not submitted via Grants.gov will not be considered.
6. 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 Page

The cover page ([Appendix C](#)) should be completed.

Table of Contents

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

Executive Summary (1 page)

The executive summary should briefly describe the proposed project activities and anticipated outcomes. This section should 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. Applicants should include three (3) LOS from partners as appendices.

Applicant Information (1 page)

The application information section shall provide a narrative description of the applicant’s organizational structure, capacity to complete activities outlined in this RFA, and experience with school food service and in working with school nutrition professionals and/or the food industry to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Applicants should specifically address any experience awarding and managing sub-grants. If the entity 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 entities, including the food industry, who have committed to working with the applicant on the proposed activities. LOS documenting these commitments shall be included in the appendices.

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 and to partner or work collaboratively with other entities to affect a meaningful impact on racial equity and inclusion.

Any conflict of interest identified by the applicant related to the entity, 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 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 [Section 1.4: “Key Objectives”](#) and the [cooperator requirements](#) of this cooperative agreement and must include a project timeline. Applicants should propose innovative solutions and describe an impactful sub-grant approach to test and implement their approaches for the improvement of the K-12 food system and establish and/or strengthen partnerships between various entities of the food system, including food industry, to create a sustainable, resilient, equitable, and nutritious school food system. The project timeline should start on March 2023, and end December 31, 2028, and include dates for important project milestones and deadlines as described in this RFA.

In preparing the Project Narrative, applicants should address the following areas, noting any relevant experience in managing similar activities. Applicants should provide the information requested in the order presented below:

1. **Developing the sub-grants process for RFA.** The applicant shall describe how they will collaborate with USDA FNS to incorporate the purpose, objectives, and specific sub-grant requirements into the RFA. The sub-grant applications must use OMB-approved application forms. The plan for sub-grants shall detail how the applicant will develop the sub-grant process to promote incentivizing innovation and partnerships among school districts, agricultural producers, food suppliers, food distributors, and community partners.
2. **Posting and promoting.** The applicant will promote the sub-grants to the target audiences. The applicant shall 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 any communication efforts or campaigns.
3. **Developing and maintaining a secure website and online application process for sub-grant applications.** The applicant will describe how the website shall present the School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants to the public while meeting the stated requirements. The website shall provide training and TA tools to assist applicants in successfully submitting applications. It shall accept, manage, store, and index applications, as well as the required documentation for each application. The website shall provide applicants with confirmation of the date and time of their application submission. The applicant shall be able to provide USDA FNS 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 and comply with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (<https://www.section508.gov>).

4. **Providing customer service and TA to eligible applicants applying for sub-grants.** The applicant shall highlight their experience with/ability to provide customer service to support applicants in applying for the sub-grants.
5. **Utilizing a competitive process to evaluate and score sub-grant applications and recommend applicants for awards.** The applicant shall describe how they will pre-screen for completeness, review, and evaluate sub-grant applications against established criteria (agreed upon by USDA FNS), which should include but not be limited to school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and community partners information (enrollment, locality, etc.) and project design and implementation (how the grant project will be implemented including the appropriate use of grant funds and key staff). USDA must approve all sub-grant awards prior to applicant notification.
6. **Transferring funds to sub-grantees and monitoring effective and appropriate utilization of sub-grant funds.** The applicant shall describe their method of transferring sub-grant funds to awardees. The applicant shall include how they will provide fiscal oversight and exercise effective internal control of funds provided to sub-grantees to ensure that all costs are allowable; keep an inventory and record of sub-grantee expenditures (including justifiable small and large equipment); and monitor sub-grantee financial progress.
7. **Monitoring sub-grantee progress towards goals and objectives.** The applicant shall describe how they will monitor sub-grantee progress towards goals and objectives including regularly collecting progress reports from sub-grantees and summarizing such reports for submission to USDA FNS (format for sub-grantee reporting to be agreed upon with USDA FNS).
8. **Providing training and technical assistance.** The applicant shall describe how they will provide sub-grantees with training and TA and track all training and TA provided. The applicant shall deliver training and TA themselves or shall have experienced school nutrition staff or partners provide TA.
9. **Collecting and communicating best practices and success stories from sub-grantees.** The applicant shall propose a strategy to collect best practices and success stories regarding partnerships with food industry members, food product development, marketing to and acceptance of products among SFAs, and student satisfaction with new products. The strategy must also include a description of how success stories and best practices will be shared via meetings, web content, social media, and print materials.
10. **Providing language services and resources.** The applicant shall describe how they will provide all materials for sub-grantees in both English and Spanish, at a minimum, utilizing qualified, professional, experienced translators who possess a high level of translation skills and proficiency in both English and Spanish. Further, the applicant shall describe how they will provide language assistance and translation services, such as interpreters or bilingual staff, to support training, TA, and materials for sub-grantees, as needed.
11. **Keeping records and reporting to USDA FNS.** The applicant shall describe how they will maintain records of their own and sub-grantee activities and expenditures and submit quarterly and final performance and financial status reports to USDA FNS. The Cooperator(s) will be required to utilize USDA FNS-developed reporting templates for progress reports. 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 applicant must describe how they will securely transfer all Federal records to USDA FNS at the end of the cooperative agreement period of performance and must provide assurance that all records (including all sub-grantee information, documentation, applications, etc.) will be securely stored and maintained for three (3) years after the grant period of performance (the time frame in which an audit could occur) in accordance with Federal record keeping requirements.
12. **Providing adequate and qualified staff.** The applicant 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. Resumes for key staff and an organizational chart should be included as appendices. The applicant should describe roles and responsibilities of employees or contractors, as well as relevant qualifications and experience, and specify a level of effort for all proposed staff. This should include a description of organizational structure and identification of the staff and/or contractors who will manage the project.

Applicants are required to have a **Project Director** as key personnel 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 (included in the appendices) must demonstrate that they have the appropriate educational, technical, and experiential background for the proposed role. The Project Director must have at least a bachelor's degree and either: (1) experience in school nutrition or (2) project management experience. Experience in managing a project of similar size and scope is highly desired. When the Project Director does not have experience in school nutrition, the project's staffing plan must include a school nutrition expert who devotes a significant percentage of time to the project.

13. **Managing the project.** The applicant shall provide a clear description of the activities to be undertaken to ensure that project activities are completed on time, within budget, and with quality results. Applicants should address contingency plans for key staff, partners, and/or sub-grantee turnover. The applicant should demonstrate that the activities and/or products are sustainable beyond the grant performance period.

Budget (no page limit, include as appendix)

The budget should describe the use of grant funds and justify costs. Applicants should refer to [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E - Cost Principals](#) and [Section 2.9: Allowable Costs](#) when developing the budget. The budget must be submitted using the "Budget Information and Instruction Form" (SF-424 and SF-424A). Proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives.

If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) as an appendix. 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) as an appendix.

Budget Narrative (no page limit, include as appendix)

In addition to the budget submitted via the "Budget Information and Instruction Form" (SF-424 and SF-424A), the applicant must include a budget narrative. The budget narrative should correspond with the proposed budget submitted via the "Budget Information and Instruction Form" (SF-424 and SF-424A) and include all implementation and operational costs that are necessary to accomplish the activities outlined in this RFA. The budget narrative should be in table format, with budget categories that match those in Section B of the SF-424A. The budget narrative will further itemize the costs in each of these categories. Specifically, the budget narrative will describe how the applicant will allocate the awarded amount to complete items 1 through 12 under ["Project Narrative."](#) The budget narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct cost and include:

- Line-item descriptions for each budget item.
- Description of how each line-item amount was determined.
- Explanation of how each cost supports the grant.
- Totals for each budget category.
- Justification for any portion of grant funds awarded to partners to provide essential services.
- All funding amounts listed in whole dollars.

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

Indirect Cost Rate (include as appendix)

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 in their budget narrative.

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(s).

Activities/Indicators to be Tracked (include as appendix)

Cooperator(s) will be expected to identify appropriate activities/indicators to track their progress towards achieving the objectives of the cooperative agreement, and for use towards continuous quality improvement of their approach and processes. The applicant must provide a list of activities/indicators to be tracked. Proposed activities and indicators measuring success must be mapped to [Section: 1.4 "Key Objectives"](#) in the below format (note that additional Activities/Indicators can be added as needed when the Cooperator(s) develops the full data tracking/evaluation plan once awarded the cooperative agreement). Activities/indicators should represent those that the Cooperator(s) will use to monitor their own performance towards project objectives, as well as those that will be used to track sub-grantee progress towards their objectives.

Note: Indicators are defined as any metric the applicant anticipates tracking during the period of performance of the grant. Examples include number of sub-grant applications received, number of sub-grants awarded, number of people impacted, number of trainings offered (by Cooperator(s) and/or sub-grantees), number of people trained, number of food products created, and number of SFAs procuring new/different food products.

(Example)

Objective # 6	Collect process and outcome data from sub-grantees and provide status reports to FNS on sub-grantee progress toward their goals and objectives.
Activity (Example)	Collect status report from each sub-grantee awarded under the sub-grant RFA.
Indicator(s) (Example)	Each status report contains all objectives required by FNS.

Objective #	
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Activity	
Indicator(s)	

Objective #	
Activity	
Indicator(s)	

Objective #	
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Objective #	
Activity	
Indicator(s)	

Required Grant Application Forms (include as appendix or submit electronically)

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

4.2 Submission Date

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

- Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Mailed, e-mailed, or hand-delivered application packages will not be accepted. For further instructions on submitting your application electronically, refer to [Section 4.4: “How to Apply via Grants.gov.”](#)
- Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- 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.
- 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](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov) may send multiple confirmation notices; applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was **accepted**. Applicants having trouble submitting applications to [Grants.gov](https://www.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 [Sam.gov](https://www.sam.gov) and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) to apply to USDA FNS via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), as required. USDA FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration process at least **four weeks before** the due date.

To apply, you must follow the steps below:

1. *Obtaining a Unique Entity ID (UEI)*

- Existing entities can find their UEI by following the steps here: https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0041254.
- New entities can get their UEI by registering in the System for Award Management (SAM).

Note: Entities can register in SAM and will be assigned their UEI within SAM. They will no longer obtain or use a DUNS for entity registration or reporting. For additional information on the UEI process, please visit: [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) | [Duns - Sam UEI](#).

2. *Registering in the System for Award Management (SAM)*

- SAM combines Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance into one system. For additional information regarding SAM, see the following link: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.
- 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 Step 3.
- To register, you must have your 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.
- Ensure you enter your EBusiness Point of Contact (EBiz POC) name and EBiz POC email in SAM, and the EBiz POC will be contacted when your organization/entity registration process is complete in SAM and you have been assigned your UEI.
- Contact the Federal Support Help Desk at <https://www.fsd.gov/> for help with the UEI.
- 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.

3. *Create a Grants.gov Account*

The next step in the registration process is to create an account with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applicants must know their organization's UEI to complete this process. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on [Grants.gov](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov), the EBiz POC will receive an email notifying them that the registration is complete and requesting them to assign profile roles. The E-Biz POC will need to log into [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and authorize the appropriate roles. An approved Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must complete and submit the application online at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). To learn more about the E-Biz POC role and other profile roles, please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>.

To track your role request, please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>.

Note: When applications are submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.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 Apply 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>

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

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

4.5 Grants.gov Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 PM EST on the due date listed on the cover page, as detailed in [Section 4.2: "Submission Date."](#) Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by [Grants.gov](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov) with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When USDA FNS successfully retrieves the application from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and acknowledges the download of submissions, [Grants.gov](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov) receives your application. Applications received by [Grants.gov](https://www.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, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that it could take some time before [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) receives your application. Again, [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the person with the AOR role. The [Grants.gov](https://www.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.

4.6 Naming Conventions

All applicants **MUST** follow [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance below, taken from 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.

Note: If these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected. USDA FNS will not accept any application rejected from www.grants.gov portal due to incorrect naming conventions.

Additional information and applicant resources are available at:

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

4.6 Funding Restrictions

- 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.
- USDA FNS **will not** award pre-award costs for this cooperative agreement.

5. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 Compliance with Program Regulations

USDA FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure the applicants are eligible entities and comply with all Program regulations. USDA FNS will not approve any waivers from Program regulations for any projects submitted in response to this solicitation.

5.2 Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria and scoring will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA. The Project Narrative should demonstrate an understanding of the Development and Implementation of School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants Cooperative Agreement and the [Section 1.4: "Key Objectives"](#) and [cooperator requirements](#) of this RFA. Total possible points for scoring are 100 points.

Evaluation of the cooperative agreement application will be based on:

Overall Approach (50 points)

A. [Section 1.4: "Key Objectives"](#) and [Cooperator Requirements](#) (20 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Demonstrate how they will meet [Section 1.4: "Key Objectives"](#) and the [Cooperator requirements](#) contained within the RFA.
 - Applicants should propose innovative solutions and describe an impactful sub-grant approach to test and implement their approaches for the improvement of the K-12 food system and establish and/or strengthen partnerships between various entities of the food system, including food industry, to create a sustainable, resilient, equitable, and nutritious school food system.
 - Demonstrate expertise in creating and implementing a successful sub-grant award program including the posting of an RFA.

- Demonstrate knowledge of school meals and current meal pattern standards, and briefly address the challenges that SFAs and other partners within the food system have in meeting meal pattern standards.
- Describe the types of projects that will be funded and discuss how and why it was determined that this approach would be most impactful to the K-12 food system.
- Propose a plan for developing the online application portal and marketing the sub-grant opportunity.
- Propose a plan for reviewing the sub-grant applications and recommending projects to USDA FNS for funding.
- Discuss how they plan to distribute the sub-grant funds to sub-grantees.
- Describe a plan to develop and distribute best practices and success stories to stakeholders across the country to support implementation of the meal pattern standards.

B. Training and Technical Assistance (10 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Explain their approach to providing training and TA to assist entities in applying for the School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grant.
 - Explain their approach to providing training and TA to sub-grantees to assist them in meeting their goals and objectives.
 - Describe and document previous experiences providing TA to similar audiences.
 - Address how they will ensure that all materials for sub-grantees are available in, at a minimum, both English and Spanish.
 - Address how they will accommodate diverse language needs while providing training and TA to applicants and sub-grantees.

C. Sub-Grantee Tracking and Monitoring (10 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Describe a plan for monitoring sub-grantee expenditures.
 - Demonstrate effective controls to ensure sub-grantee funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail.
 - Describe a plan for monitoring sub-grantee programmatic activities and ensuring achievement of stated objectives.

D. Data Collection and Reporting (10 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Provide Activities/Indicators that demonstrate their ability to evaluate project implementation.
 - Demonstrate the ability to evaluate sub-grantee activities.
 - Describe a process for collecting progress data from sub-grantees, compiling the data, and reporting the data to USDA FNS.
 - Establish a plan for collecting and reporting best-practices and success stories.
 - Develop a plan to ensure activities and/or products are sustainable beyond the grant performance period.

Staffing (25 Points)

- Applicant should:
 - Identify and describe the roles and responsibilities of key personnel and other partners and staff involved in the proposed project.
 - Provide relevant education, skills, and experience of key staff that makes them qualified for their proposed roles on the project (e.g., staff have expertise in school nutrition and meal pattern

- standards, culinary knowledge and skills, product development, data collection, and project evaluation).
- Describe their understanding and knowledge of the background and purpose of the cooperative agreement and describe how they will provide any necessary training to key staff and partners.
- Provide sufficient and complete documentation that the time commitment of key personnel appears to be appropriate for their project roles.
- Propose an approach and timeline for hiring new staff to support the cooperative agreement (if applicable).
- 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.

Note: Required LOS from established partners should be included in the appendices.

Project Management (10 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Clearly outline a reasonable timeline for delivery of project milestones and deliverables.
 - Discuss the practicality of the presented project timeline and whether presented milestones and deadlines are realistic and achievable.
 - Discuss how they will provide the oversight necessary to ensure high-quality products, services, or outcomes and to keep the cooperative agreement on time and within budget.
 - Discuss any relevant experience and established partnerships that may enhance the cooperative agreement, and skills in designing and carrying out similar projects.
 - Demonstrate effective internal controls to ensure funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail.
 - Address contingency plans for key staff, partners, and/or sub-grantee turnover.
 - Demonstrate potential for strong interrelationships, teamwork, and cooperation with the other Cooperator(s), USDA FNS, and other stakeholders.

Budget and Budget Narrative (15 points)

- Applicant should:
 - Demonstrate that all costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives.
 - Clearly describe how costs within the budget categories were derived.
 - Identify linkages between expenditures and specific activities/tasks.
 - Provide documentation within the budget and budget narrative of all implementation and operational costs that are necessary to accomplish the objectives of this project.
 - Provide supporting documentation of experience managing a budget exceeding \$500,000.

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

Bonus Points (up to 10 additional points)

- Bonus points will be awarded if:
 - the application demonstrates that the chosen approach is intended to result in a meaningful impact through collaborative efforts with the food industry on racial equity and inclusion by supporting underserved communities' access to healthy school foods. (up to 5 points)
 - indicate a plan to contract or partner with businesses with economically or socially disadvantaged

owners to achieve the objectives of this cooperative agreement. (up to 5 points)

5.3 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 applications for consideration for an award based on the evaluation scoring. The Selecting Official reserves the right to accept the panel's recommendation or to select an application for funding out of order to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, or project diversity. USDA FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants during this or the subsequent fiscal year, should additional funds be made available.

6. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 Federal Award Notice

The Government is not obligated to make any award because 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 be not released to the public. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

6.2.1 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, or employment information (National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) SP 800-122, Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable information, April 2010).

Applicants submitting applications in response to this RFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the USDA 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; OMB 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 applying 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) ensuring that data transmitted via approved file sharing services (CloudVault, ShareFile, etc.), CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, etc., is 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 those applying, including States and tribal governments, 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 recipient will be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules prior to approving a sub-grant award by checking the Systems for Award Management (SAM) at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Effective April 4, 2022, all grant applicants must obtain a Unique Entity ID (SAM) 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 number visit: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

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

FNS may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with the requirements described in 2 CFR 25 to provide a valid 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 Federal grantees, including State agencies, are required to report actions taken on or after October 1, 2010, that obligate \$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). 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 their five (5) 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, and suspension and debarment information from 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. FNS will redact PII.

For additional information on the FOIA process, please contact the USDA FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at FOIA@usda.gov.

Privacy Policy

The USDA FNS does not collect any PII 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 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 CFR 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 [Section: 7 “Federal Awarding Agency Contacts.”](#)

6.3 Reporting Requirements

6.3.1 Financial Reports

The Cooperator(s) will be required to enter the SF-425 (Financial Status Report) into the USDA FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis. To access FPRS, Cooperator(s) 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(s) will be required to submit progress reports to USDA FNS 30 days following the end of each quarter, using the FNS-908 PPR form that will be sent to Cooperator(s) at the time of award. The reports should cover the preceding period of activity. A final report identifying the accomplishments and results of the project will be due 120 days after the end date of the award.

Note: The PPR form specific to this opportunity will be sent to the Cooperator(s) at the time of award. Use of the 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 including major accomplishments with accompanying quantitative data, challenges encountered, solutions developed, and major planned activities for the following quarter. Information in the report should be tied to [Section 1.4: “Key Objectives”](#) and the [Cooperator\(s\) activities](#) included in the proposal. Quarterly progress reports must provide the following information:

- A description of progress towards project goals and objectives, as well as a description of marketing of sub-grants, trainings and TA to sub-grantees, and other activities that occurred during the quarter related to managing the sub-grants (including descriptions of approaches, methods, materials used, and reach).

- For any training conducted, the total number of training participants and average hours of training delivered by topic (e.g., sub-grant application process, application support).
- 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 (e.g., enrollment, size, percent of enrolled students that qualify for free or reduced-price meals, tribally-controlled schools).
- A summary and description of TA provided including number and length of TA sessions and the topics covered.
- A summary and description of how partnering organization(s) were engaged (if applicable).
- A summary and description of the status of the distribution of funds.
- Budget impacts and deviations from the proposed plan.
- Challenges encountered and how they were addressed/resolved.
- Major planned activities for the next quarter.

Final Report

Within 120 calendar days after the end of the period of performance for this cooperative agreement, the Cooperator(s) must electronically submit a final PPR form that compiles all information required in the quarterly progress reports. The Cooperator(s) 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, TA, and award-related activities that occurred during the entirety of the cooperative agreement for sub-grants (including descriptions of approaches, methods, materials used, and reach).
- A synopsis of training and TA provided throughout the period of performance of the cooperative agreement and key takeaways. Any trends in types of training and TA needed shall be described.
- The total number of sub-grant applications received (listed by USDA FNS region and State) and how many sub-grants were awarded, including the dollar amount and outcomes of the sub-grant project.
- 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 TA efforts.
- Discussion on how the findings from the cooperative agreement activities and its results can inform other stakeholders looking improve the K-12 supply chain, as well as inform USDA FNS on future funding.

Final Deliverables

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

- All sub-grant application documents and review findings that must be retained by USDA FNS for Federal record keeping purposes.
- Data export of all sub-grant awards, including sub-grantee name, address, state, zip code, and award amount.
- All TA (e.g., tip sheets, fact sheets) created with funds from this cooperative agreement as design files.
- All webpages created throughout this cooperative agreement and data/analytics.
- All 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 USDA FNS has royalty-free, unlimited rights to the use and printing of any photographs, graphics, and custom illustrations.

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
Alexandra, VA 22314
E-mail: 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(s) 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: BUDGET

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 project narrative. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

ITEM	YES	NO
Personnel		
Did you include all 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 and other staff members will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTE)?		
Fringe Benefits		
Did you include your organization’s fringe benefit amount along with the basis for the computation?		
Did you list the type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds?		
Travel		
<p>Are travel expenses itemized for each trip (e.g., origination/destination points, purpose of trip, number of staff traveling, mode of transportation to destination, ground transportation, hotel accommodations, and Federal per diem)?</p> <p>Note: Travel as needed/ justified is an allowable expense using the per diem rates established in 41 CFR Part 301. Per diem rates may be found online at https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates.</p>		
Are the objectives and justifications for the travel included in the narrative?		
Is the basis for the lodging estimates identified in the budget? For example, include excerpt from travel regulations.		
Equipment		
Is the need for the equipment justified in the narrative?		
Are the types of equipment, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased listed in the budget?		
Is the basis for the cost per item or other basis of computation stated in the budget?		
Supplies		
Are the types of supplies, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased reflected in the budget?		

ITEM	YES	NO
Is the basis for the costs per item or other basis of computation stated?		
Contractual: (USDA 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 for the identified cost to be approved.		
Other		
<p>Consultant Services –</p> <p>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 –</p> <p>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>		
Indirect Costs		
Has the applicant obtained a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most recent and signed negotiated rate agreement must be provided along with the application.		
2 CFR 200 allows any non-Federal entity (NFE) that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), which the NFE may use indefinitely as a Federally negotiated rate.		

APPENDIX B: FNS-906 GRANT PROGRAM ACCOUNTING SYSTEM AND FINANCIAL CAPABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

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 three (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 five (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 five (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 five (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 five (5) fiscal years, was there a “Significant Deficiency” disclosed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hyperlink (if available):		

Additional information including expanding on responses in previous sections:

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

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

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

Name of Authorized Representative:

Phone Number:

Email:

Cover Page
Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative
Cooperative Agreement for Development and Implementation of School Food
System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants
CFDA: #10.579

Organization Information

Legal Organization Name: _____

Web Address: _____

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): _____

Mailing Address:

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Organization Director Information

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Grant Project Director Information

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Requested Funding Amount: _____

Letter of Intent
Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative
Cooperative Agreement for Development and Implementation of School Food
System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants
CFDA: #10.579

If you intend to apply for the *School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants Cooperative Agreement*, please complete the section below and return this form by January 9, 2023 to the Grant Officer (see below). This intent does not obligate the applicant to apply but will provide useful information to USDA FNS as we prepare for the review and selection process.

Please submit your letter of Intent to:

Grant Officer: Anna Arrowsmith
Email: anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov

Organization Information

Legal Organization Name: _____

Web Address: _____

Mailing Address:

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Grant Project Director Information

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____