

## Questions and Answers on the Supporting the Use of Traditional Indigenous Foods in the Child Nutrition Programs Cooperative Agreement Request for Applications

Please refer to the [Request for Applications](#) and watch the recorded [Informational Webinar](#) for more detailed information.

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### DEFINITIONS

Please refer to [Appendix A – Definitions](#) (page 41-44 of the Request for Applications) for a full list of definitions.

#### **Q: What is a “School Food Authority (SFA)?”**

A: An SFA is the governing body that 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 Food and Nutrition Service to operate Federal school meal programs. In most states, the SFAs are school districts. Contact your state agency at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-contacts> to find your local SFAs. If the Lead Applicant entity is not an SFA, they must partner with one or more SFAs to increase the use of traditional Indigenous foods in Child Nutrition Programs.

#### **Q: What is a “cooperative agreement?”**

A: A cooperative agreement is federal assistance, in the form of money or property, authorized by federal law to support programs with a public purpose that the government wishes to encourage. A cooperative agreement includes substantial programmatic involvement on the part of the agency, which in this case is USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

**Q: What is “crediting?”**

A: Crediting refers to how a food item contributes toward the meal pattern requirements in Child Nutrition Programs. There are requirements by law that meals served as part of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program must contain various food components (e.g., vegetables, fruits, grains) in specified amounts and that certain nutritional standards (e.g., amount of fat, saturated fat, and sodium) must be met. When a meal is served that meets all the requirements, the School Food Authority (see definition below) receives a per-meal reimbursement from USDA. When we refer to how a food “credits” within the meal pattern requirements, we are referring to which food component it provides and how it contributes to the nutritional standards. The [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) is the primary technical assistance resource used to assist in determining the specific contribution a food item makes toward the meal pattern requirements. This is necessary to ensure that meals provide balanced nourishment and meet program requirements for reimbursement.

**Q: Which tribes constitute the “Federally Recognized Tribes?”**

A: There are a total of 347 Federally Recognized Tribes within the contiguous 48 states and 227 federally recognized tribal entities within the state of Alaska that comprise the 574 [Federally Recognized Tribes of the United States](#). The Indian entities are recognized to have the immunities and privileges available to Federally Recognized Tribes by virtue of their Government-to-Government relationship with the United States as well as the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations of such Indian Tribes.

**Q: Who is a “Native Hawaiian?”**

A: A Native Hawaiian is any individual who is a descendant of the aboriginal people who, prior to 1778, occupied and exercised sovereignty in the area that now constitutes the State of Hawaii.

**Q: What is “traditional Indigenous food?”**

A: As per the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2014 ([25 U.S.C. 1685\(b\)\(5\)](#)) the term “traditional food” means food that has traditionally been prepared and consumed by an Indian Tribe. The term “traditional food” includes — wild game meat, fish, seafood, marine mammals, plants, and berries. In general, traditional Indigenous foods are local, seasonal, nutritious, and environmentally friendly, and include herbs and medicinal plants. Certain traditional Indigenous foods are not only seen as nourishment but also as a connection to Mother Earth and to ancestral knowledge. It is important to recognize that there are many distinct cultural groups in different geographic regions across the nation and every nation sees themselves as an independent nation with their own language, culture, and customs.

**Q: What is meant by a “regional approach?”**

A: There are 574 [Federally Recognized Tribes of the United States](#) and nearly a quarter of Hawaiian residents are Native Hawaiian. Each community has its own rich and diverse culture and food traditions; thus, a local/regional approach will ensure that the needs of the specific tribes being served are addressed through the projects funded under this Request for Application. Eligible applicants must propose a project that supports School Food Authorities serving students from Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians from a specified region of the contiguous United States, Alaska, or Hawaii (regions may, but are not required to, correspond to USDA FNS regions). Approaches serving multiple tribes are encouraged, and applicants are encouraged to serve high numbers of tribal students.

**Q: What is meant by “leadership staff?”**

A: The Request for Application (RFA) refers to the **“leadership and staff”** of the Lead Applicant entity, not the **“leadership staff.”** The organization that is applying as the Lead Applicant entity, must be led and primarily staffed by members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians. The RFA does not specify which staff members must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians. The primary focus is that the Lead Applicant entity is led and primarily (more than 50%) staffed by members of the mentioned groups.

**Q: What is a “school nutrition subject matter expert?”**

A: A school nutrition subject matter expert is **any person with knowledge of and/or experience in delivering the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP).**

In every School Food Authority (SFA), the individual supervising the NSLP and/or SBP, regardless of their job title or qualifications, is recognized as a school nutrition subject matter expert. This individual doesn’t necessarily have to be a “nutritionist” or “dietitian.”

Furthermore, any person who holds the position of a Director or Manager in a school nutrition program and has completed 12 or 10 hours of training respectively to comply with the [USDA Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs](#), is also considered a school nutrition subject matter expert.

School nutrition subject matter experts may also work at outside of SFAs, for example at non-profit organizations, at farms, or within the food industry.

## ELIGIBILITY

**Q: If an entity has a current or past record of receiving USDA Grants, can they apply for this cooperative agreement?**

A: Past or current funding from USDA does not preclude you from applying for this cooperative agreement. Funds awarded for this cooperative agreement may not support activities that are funded through another funding source. All project activities must be unique to this cooperative agreement.

**Q: Who is eligible to apply for this cooperative agreement as the Lead Applicant entity?**

A: Lead applicant entities must meet criteria A, B, and C below:

A) Entity must be one of the following entity types:

- 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- School Food Authority that participates in the National School Lunch Program
- Tribal government owned entity, arm, or instrumentality
- Native Hawaiian Organization as recognized by the Department of the Interior
- Other non-governmental entity including Tribal Colleges & Universities
- Fiscal sponsor of any of the above eligible entities

**AND**

B) The leadership and staff of the entity must be predominantly (more than 50%) members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians. (In the case of a fiscal sponsorship, this provision applies to the fiscally sponsored entity. In the case of partnerships, this provision applies to the Lead Applicant entity, but the Lead Applicant entity may have non-qualifying partners).

**AND**

C) The entity must demonstrate existing relationships, experience and expertise in training, technical assistance, school nutrition, Indigenous foods, and nutrition education.

Please refer to Section 3.1 – Eligible Applicants (pages 18-19 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

**Q: Who is eligible to be a partner (not the Lead Applicant entity) in this cooperative agreement?**

A: The entity types listed in Criteria A above can serve as partners. Criteria B does not apply to partners.

Please refer to Section 3.2 - Partnerships (page 19 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

**Q: Can entities in the U.S. Territories apply for the cooperative agreement?**

A: No. Entities in the U.S. Territories are not eligible. The project must support School Food Authorities serving students from Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians in the contiguous United States, Alaska, or Hawaii. Please refer to Section 3.1 – Eligible Applicants (pages 18-19 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

**Q: The Request for Applications states that in order to apply, a School Food Authority (SFA) must provide a letter stating that they are in good standing with their State agency. What does this mean?**

A: SFAs that participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program are subject to Administrative Reviews of their operations by their State agency to ensure compliance with all applicable program regulations. After the Administrative Review is conducted and any findings are rectified, the State agency will provide the SFA with a letter indicating that they are in good standing which is valid until their next Administrative Review.

**Q: Are principals able to apply for this grant or does it have to go through the Child Nutrition Program?**

A: The Lead Applicant entity must be a School Food Authority (SFA), not an individual school. Whether the SFA is the Lead Applicant entity or a partner, the cooperative agreement activities will be carried out within the schools that are part of that SFA.

**Q: To be the Lead Applicant for this cooperative agreement, is it necessary for more than 50% of the leadership and staff of the organization to be “enrolled” members of a Federally Recognized Tribe?**

A: No.

**Q: For Objective #4, can you clarify whether the requirement that nutrition education be delivered predominantly by (50% or more) members of the Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiian applies to all staff within an individual school?**

*Objective #4: Develop culturally relevant nutrition education materials for students to accompany the traditional Indigenous foods that are served as part of their meals; train school nutrition professionals and other school staff on providing culturally relevant nutrition education to students; and ensure that nutrition education is delivered to students. 50% or more of those providing nutrition education directly to students must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.*

A: USDA understands that in many schools serving tribal communities, all the staff may not be from those communities.

While we encourage School Food Authorities/schools to strive for the 50% or more threshold, if the Lead Applicant entity and/or partners (50% or more from Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiian) provide training to school staff on delivering nutrition education, and those staff then deliver the nutrition education directly to students – there is some flexibility on the 50% or more threshold for school level staff.

We encourage applicants to think creatively about ways to achieve the 50% or more threshold such as grouping schools together for nutrition education activities; utilizing virtual platforms for nutrition education led by members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians; or implementing a combined approach whereby member(s) of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians provide virtual instruction in conjunction with an on-site classroom teacher.

**Q: What types of indigenous groups or associations are eligible to apply.**

A: Any organization that is a 501C3 nonprofit; a tribal government owned entity, arm or Instrumentality; a native Hawaiian organization, as recognized by the Department of the Interior; or other non-governmental entity, including tribal colleges and universities, are eligible to apply.

**Q: Can the State agency be a fiscal sponsor?**

A: No.

## **DATES, PURPOSE, AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Q: What are the important dates to be aware of?**

A: Below is a list of important dates:

- Letter of Intent (optional) due date: **11:59 pm EST on February 19, 2024**
- Application due date: **11:59 pm EST on April 8, 2024**
- Anticipated award announcement date: **May/June 2024**
- Anticipated period of performance (start and end date of the award): **June 1, 2024 - May 31, 2026**

Please refer to Section 2 - Federal Award Information (page 13 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

### **Q: What is the purpose of this cooperative agreement?**

A: The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to provide tailored training and technical assistance (TA) to School Food Authorities that serve tribal communities and participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Funds may be used to provide training, TA, and nutrition education to support the use of traditional Indigenous foods in the NSLP, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Seamless Summer Option, and/or Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals. The cooperators, with USDA Food and Nutrition Service guidance and approval, will also develop culturally relevant nutrition education materials for students to accompany the traditional Indigenous foods that are served, and the cooperators will train school nutrition professionals and other school staff on providing nutrition education to students. Please refer to Section 1.2 – Program Description (pages 6-8 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

### **Q: What are the key objectives of this funding opportunity?**

A: Objectives are goals to be obtained. There are six key objectives that must be met as part of this cooperative agreement. The seventh objective is optional.

1. Gather information on barriers to including traditional Indigenous foods in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and strengths and challenges related to training and technical assistance (TA) (using past feedback obtained through consultation and other channels, to the extent possible), provide a report to USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and utilize information gained to inform project implementation.
2. Provide culturally appropriate training and TA to meet the unique needs of school nutrition professionals who procure, prepare, and serve meals for tribal communities – drawing on the expertise of school nutrition professionals and others from the tribal

communities being served. 50% or more of those providing training and TA for staff must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.

3. Market and distribute cooperator and FNS-developed resources, tools, and trainings through culturally appropriate avenues.
4. Develop culturally relevant nutrition education materials for students to accompany the traditional Indigenous foods that are served as part of their meals; train school nutrition professionals and other school staff on providing culturally relevant nutrition education to students; and ensure that nutrition education is delivered to students. 50% or more of those providing nutrition education directly to students must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.
5. Support the establishment of new procurement relationships; supply chain development/coordination; development, standardizing, and testing of new recipes; and/or increased engagement of students and their parents/caregivers, school nutrition professionals, other school staff, and tribal partners in increasing traditional Indigenous foods in the meals served through the CNP.
6. Facilitate a regional Community of Practice of school nutrition professionals from tribal serving schools to share best practices, collaborate, and learn from each other.
7. **(OPTIONAL)** Provide funding in the form of sub-grants to School Food Authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program to support them in the implementation of concepts learned through training and TA.

Please refer to Section 1.2 – Key Objectives (pages 9-10 of the Request for Applications) for detailed information.

**Q: Can this funding be utilized to support the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?**

A: This funding is specifically designated to support School Food Authorities (SFA) that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Funds cannot be used to support the CACFP offered through child care centers or family child care homes. However, if an SFA that participates in NSLP also participates in the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals (CACFP At-Risk) program, the funds may be used to support the inclusion of traditional Indigenous foods in meals or snacks provided through the CACFP At-Risk program.

**Q: Can this cooperative agreement be used to support the inclusion of traditional Indigenous foods in university dining services?**

A: No. This funding is specifically designated to support School Food Authorities that participate in the National School Lunch Program.

**Q: Who may receive training and technical assistance under this cooperative agreement?**

A: Staff of any School Food Authority (SFA) that serves students from Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians, regardless of location (on or off reservation) or management structure (tribally controlled, run by the Bureau of Indian Education, or run as an independent school district), may receive training and technical assistance under this agreement. The SFAs that are supported through this cooperative agreement must participate in the National School Lunch Program.

**Q: If a tribal government wishes to apply for this grant, is it a requirement for the tribe to be participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)?**

A: The tribe does not need to participate in the NSLP. School Food Authorities to be supported under the cooperative agreement must participate in NSLP.

## PERSONNEL, STAFFING, AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Q: Can entities include subcontractors in their application?**

A: While the Lead Applicant entity will be responsible for managing the programmatic and financial aspects of the cooperative agreement, the Lead Applicant entity may utilize subcontractors to complete some portion of the work. However, at least 50% of those delivering training or technical assistance to staff and nutrition education to students must be members of the Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.

**Q: Can entities include partners in their application?**

A: The Lead Applicant entity may involve partners to accomplish the activities outlined in this Request for Application. The USDA FNS recognizes the potential benefits of leveraging the strengths and capacities of different entities through partnerships. In the application, the applying entity should describe any planned or existing partnerships that will contribute to the cooperative agreement. However, at least 50% of those delivering training or technical assistance to staff and nutrition education to students must be members of the Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.

**Q: Can a Lead Applicant entity serve as a partner on another entity's application?**

A: Yes. The Lead Applicant entity may serve as a partner on another entity's application; however, their work on the partner application must be entirely distinct from the project for which they are the Lead Applicant entity. Entities cannot receive funding from more than one funding source for the same exact work.

**Q: Can an entity serve as a partner on more than one application?**

A: Yes. An entity may serve as a partner on more than one application; however, they may not receive funding through more than one application for the exact same work.

**Q: How many partners must the Lead Applicant entity have?**

A: There is no minimum or maximum requirement for the number of partners the Lead Applicant entity must have. If the Lead Applicant entity is not a School Food Authority (SFA), they must partner with one or more SFAs to increase the use of traditional Indigenous foods in the Child Nutrition Programs.

**Q: Are the partners required to be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians?**

A: The partners do not have to be members of a Federally Recognized Tribe and/or Native Hawaiian. This requirement applies only to the Lead Applicant entity.

**Q: Will there be a list of school nutrition programs that require training, or is it necessary to conduct outreach to identify them?**

A: No, a list of school nutrition programs that require training will not be provided. Applicants are expected to have existing relationships or form partnerships with school nutrition programs in their communities. Outreach efforts may be necessary to identify school nutrition programs in need of training.

**Q: Can a School Food Authority (SFA) that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) partner with an SFA that does not participate to carry out activities under this cooperative agreement?**

A: No. All SFA's to be served through this cooperative agreement (whether as the Lead Applicant entity or as a partner) must participate in the NSLP. While we encourage partnerships between SFAs, funds from this cooperative agreement may only support activities at SFAs that participate in NSLP.

**Q: Is it required that the Project Director be on staff at the time of application?**

A: No. The Project Director does not have to be on staff at the time of the application. If the Project Director is already hired, the applicant should include their resume in the appendices. If the Project Director has not been hired, the applicant should include a job description in the appendices and must hire the Project Director within six months of the beginning of the period of performance. Please refer to page 23 of the Request for Applications for detailed information.

**Q: Is it required that the Project Director be an employee of the Lead Applicant entity?**

A: No. The Project Director must meet all the requirements listed within the Request for Applications; however, they do not need to be an employee of the Lead Applicant entity.

**Q: To which entity(ies) does the requirement for the leadership and staff of the entity to be predominantly members of the Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians apply?**

A: The requirement that the entity be led and primarily staffed by members of the Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians applies to the Lead Applicant entity. Partner entities do not have to meet this requirement. Eligible applicants must propose a project that supports School Food Authorities serving students from Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians from a specified region of the contiguous United States, Alaska, or Hawaii. The requirement that the entity be led and primarily staffed by members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians does not apply to the School Food Authorities (SFA) to be supported through this cooperative agreement. The funding may be used to support SFAs that operate the National School Lunch Program regardless of location (on or off reservation) or management structure (tribally controlled, run by the Bureau of Indian Education, or run as an independent school district).

**Q: Will a list of applicants who submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) be published for others to seek potential partnerships for this cooperative agreement?**

A: No. The list of applicants who submitted a LOI will not be published for others to seek potential partnerships.

**Q: Do we need to have a documented agreement with the school or School Food Authority (SFA) if we are providing training in schools?**

A: We strongly encourage you to submit a Letter of Support (LOS) from any SFA that you plan to work with. Each SFA may have different documentation requirements to work with the schools.

**Q: For the requirement that at least 50% of those providing training and technical assistance to school nutrition professionals or nutrition education to students be part of a Federally Recognized Tribe and/or Native Hawaiian, must they be “enrolled” members of a Federally Recognized Tribe?**

A: No.

**Q: Can the State agency be a partner in the cooperative agreement or provide a Letter of Support (LOS)?**

A: Yes, the State agency can provide a LOS for an application for the cooperative agreement.

If the Lead Applicant entity is a School Food Authority (SFA) they must include a letter from the State agency indicating that they are in good standing. SFAs that participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program are subject to Administrative Reviews of their operations by their State agency to ensure compliance with all applicable program regulations. After the Administrative Review is conducted and any findings are rectified, the

Stage agency will provide the SFA with a letter indicating that they are in good standing which is valid until their next Administrative Review.

While State agencies cannot receive funding through the cooperative agreement (they already receive funding from USDA to support SFAs in implementing the Child Nutrition Programs), they are allowed to contribute support cooperators by providing training, technical assistance, and resources.

**Q: Are applicants required to submit a Letter of Support (LOS) from each School Food Authority (SFA) that they plan to work with?**

A: No, applicants are not required to submit a LOS from each SFA that they plan to work with. We strongly recommend that applicants include an LOS from at least one of the SFAs that they plan to work with. As we allow no more than three LOS to be submitted, it may not be possible to include a LOS from every SFA that an applicant is planning to work with. Another option would be to submit one LOS that is signed by all of the SFAs that you plan to work with.

**Q: How formal does the Letter of Support (LOS) from a School Food Authority (SFA) need to be and is there a template letter?**

A: No, there is no template letter for the LOS. The LOS can be brief, simply indicating the intent of the SFA to work with the applicant on the project and should be signed by someone who has the authority to agree to such activities. This person may differ among SFAs and may include the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Food Service Director, and other district level staff such as a Health and Wellness Coordinator.

**Q: Is there a minimum number of Letters of Support (LOS) that must be provided?**

A: We did not specify a minimum number of LOS. However, we would strongly recommend including an LOS from the SFA(s) that you plan to work with as part of your project. LOS provide support for your application and demonstrate that partners and SFA are willing to work with you on the project.

**Q: Are applicants required to have a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each School Food Authority (SFA) that they plan to work with?**

A: No, USDA does not require that applicants provide a signed MOU with the SFAs that they plan to work with, though we recommend including a Letter of Support (LOS) from at least one of these SFAs. SFAs may require different types of documentation to acknowledge a partnership.

**Q: Should all partners be described in the “Applicant Information” section of the application?**

A: Yes, all partners should be described in the “Applicant Information” section (page 22 of the Request for Applications). The Applicant Information section must provide a narrative description of the Lead Applicant’s organizational structure and capacity to complete activities outlined in this RFA. Must include a description of existing relationships, experience, and

expertise in Indian Country in the areas of training, school nutrition, Indigenous foods, and nutrition education. This section should include a description of any entities to be funded under the cooperative agreement, including their role in the project and qualifications to complete the proposed work. Letters of Support documenting these commitments should be included in the appendices.

**Q: We are planning to assign a temporary Project Director at the beginning of the period of performance, and then hire someone to fulfill that role on a permanent basis. Should we include both the resume of the temporary Project Director and the job description for the new hire with our application?**

A. Yes.

## FUNDING AND BUDGET

**Q: Can an entity request less than \$250,000 or more than \$500,000 in funding?**

A: No. An entity may only request between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

**Q: Can the Lead Applicant entity receive more than one award?**

A: No. The Lead Applicant entity may not receive more than one award. If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.

**Q: Will this be funding opportunity be offered in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 as well?**

A: This funding opportunity is currently only available in FY2024. FNS' commitment to continuation of awards will be conditioned on the availability of funds and the determination that continued funding is in the best interest of the Federal government.

**Q: Is food an allowable expense?**

A: Yes. Food is an allowable expense. However, food costs **may not exceed ten (10) percent** of the requested funds. Food purchases must only be for training purposes, including culinary or food safety trainings for school nutrition professionals, recipe development, recipe testing, or student engagement activities such as taste tests.

Food purchases cannot be used for:

- foods used to prepare a meal for which reimbursement will be provided under the FNS nutrition assistance programs.
- foods used as an incentive or prize for a nutrition education event.
- foods provided directly to students and families to prepare and eat at home such as groceries or supplemental food.
- meal sized portions or complete meal service.

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- alcoholic beverages.
- meals or snacks for training or meeting attendees, unless approved in advance in accordance with [2 CFR 200.432 - Conferences](#).

Please refer to page 16 of the Request for Applications for detailed information.

**Q: Is equipment (>\$5000) an allowable expense?**

A: No. Equipment (>\$5000) is not an allowable expense under this cooperative agreement. Supplies (<\$5,000) necessary for food storage, preparation, production, and display of food prepared for training purposes or taste tests, including, but not limited to, food storage containers, pots/pans, mixing bowls, knives, utensils, measuring cups, and tabletop cooking devices (e.g., food processor, stand mixer) are allowable expenses.

**Q: Can the funds from this cooperative agreement be utilized to conduct in-house yield studies?**

A: Yes, funds can be used to conduct in-house yield studies.

When traditional Indigenous foods that contribute toward the meal pattern requirements are not listed and are not similar to another food in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG), in-house yields may be developed and used. Instructions for developing in-house yields are available online in the “About the Food Buying Guide” section on the home page of the FBG at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>.

Funds from this cooperative agreement **may** be used to conduct in-house yield studies. However, please note that food costs **may not exceed ten (10) percent** of the requested funds.

## APPLICATION

**Q: What should be included in the application?**

A: The requirements for the application are described fully in the Request for Applications (RFA). If you are unsure about something, review the RFA and this Q&A to find the answer to your question. The RFA is the guiding document regarding what to include in your application.

**Q: What should be included in the Project Narrative section of the application.**

A: Pages 22-24 in the Request for Applications describe in detail what should be included in the Project Narrative section of the application. Applicants should read this section carefully and ensure that all items mentioned on these pages are included in their application. The Project Narrative is the part of the application in which the applicant will describe their rationale for the

project, their ability to carry out the project, their proposed activities, and how those activities will meet the required objectives.

The Project Narrative must include information about existing relationships and expertise; the region to be served; how a community needs assessment will be conducted; how training, technical assistance, and nutrition education will be developed, marketed, and delivered; procurement and/or student engagement approaches; staffing; and evaluation and monitoring the progress of the project. Please see pages 22-24 in the Request for Applications for a full description.

**Q: What is the Activities and Indicators Tracker?**

A: The Activities and Indicators Tracker is described on pages 24-25 of the Request for Applications. For each of the six required objectives (and objective 7 if the applicant is intending to provide sub-grants) applicants must have activities (at least one per objective) to achieve the objectives. The Activities and Indicators Tracker should be used to identify these activities and provide the indicators that will be used to measure whether the activity was carried out successfully. The format shown below should be used.

**Example One  
Objective #2**

Provide culturally appropriate training and TA to meet the unique needs of school nutrition professionals who procure, prepare, and serve meals for tribal communities – drawing on the expertise of school nutrition professionals and others from the tribal communities being served. 50% or more of those providing training and TA for staff must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.

**Activity  
Indicator(s)  
Indicator(s)**

TA sessions.

Number of TA sessions conducted.

Percent of school nutrition professionals receiving TA that indicate that the information would help them incorporate more traditional Indigenous foods into meals (utilizing an end of session evaluation).

**Q: Who is considered the “Lead Applicant entity?”**

A: The Lead Applicant entity is the organization that submits the application for the cooperative agreement. If the Lead Applicant entity is not a School Food Authority (SFA), they must partner with one or more SFAs to increase the use of traditional Indigenous foods in the Child Nutrition Programs.

**Q: Can I email or mail my application?**

A: No. Applications must be submitted online through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), the official federal e-grant website, which has all the required forms and instructions posted for this announcement. Applications received via mail or email will not be accepted.

**Q: Is there guidance on using Grants.gov to apply?**

A: Guidance on using Grants.gov to apply is included on pages 28-30 of the Request for Applications. For additional resources, including video tutorials, visit [grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training](https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training).

**Q: Our Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is associated with our school district. Is that considered the Lead Applicant entity, or could it be our Food Services Department?**

A: The school district would be the Lead Applicant entity, not the Food Services Department. The Food Services Department does not have a unique UEI.

**Q: Is the Letter of Intent (LOI) required?**

A: No. The LOI is optional. It is intended to provide USDA FNS with an estimate of the number of potential applicants for planning purposes. You are not required to submit a LOI to apply and submitting one does not obligate you to apply. Please refer to page 27 of the Request for Applications for detailed information.

**Q: What should be included in the Letter of Intent (LOI)?**

A. There is an LOI template within the Request for Applications and available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under the Related Documents tab. Applicants must utilize this template for their LOI.

**Q: In the Request for Applications, the instructions are to include certain components of the application as attachments and/or appendices. Should all the attachments and/or appendices be submitted separately from the on Grants.gov?**

A: Grants.gov will allow you to upload multiple documents when you submit your application. However, we would prefer for you to combine all the documents into one PDF file to make it easier for the Grants Officer to download and share your application with Grant Reviewers.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

**Q: Is a recording of the informational webinar available?**

A: Yes. The recording of the informational webinar is posted on the Team Nutrition website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/grant/cn-supporting-indigenous-foods-cooperative-agreement>. It can also be accessed under the Related Documents tab in [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

**Q: Is there technical assistance available for potential applicants?**

A: Yes. You may contact the [Intertribal Agriculture Council's Technical Assistance Network](#) for technical assistance with your application. Please reach out to Ashley Gervais at [ashley@indianag.org](mailto:ashley@indianag.org) or (406) 214-6242.

**Q: What type of support is offered by the Intertribal Agriculture Council's Technical Assistance Network (ITAN)?**

A: ITAN can provide support to potential applicants with designing their projects, connecting with partners, and composing applications. ITAN will not write applications for other entities.

**Q: If a new vendor of Indigenous foods wants to access the current prices offered by the Department of Defense (DoD) to distributors, to assess potential profitability and the ability to cover the cost of goods sold, can those item price lists be shared?**

A: No, the price lists will not be shared. The price of produce delivered through USDA DoD Fresh is based on a long-term contract (3-5 years). The price includes the vendor's distribution costs to provide up to weekly deliveries to all participating schools, Indian Tribal Organizations, and military customers in that state. The contract requires the vendor have a Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act license, be able to offer a full line of U.S. grown produce items that meet U.S. No. 1 or better specifications, and food safety requirement (Good Agricultural Practices, Good Manufacturing Principles, Defense logistics Agency Produce Quality Audit).

Consider using the commercial price a school pays for produce they procure from a distributor or local farmer. This price more accurately reflects the market price to analyze the profit and cost of goods sold to use as a basis of a business decision. Another helpful resource to obtain current market prices of produce is USDA Market News <https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov/>

**Q: Some of the traditional Indigenous foods that our community eats are not included in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG). Can we still serve these foods as part of the Child Nutrition Programs?**

A: The [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) is the primary technical assistance resource used to assist in determining the specific contribution a food item makes toward the meal pattern requirements. This process is referred to as "crediting" (please see definition of "crediting" in the Definitions section).

While the FBG provides a relatively comprehensive list of foods commonly served in CNP, it does not include yield information for every possible food served in reimbursable meals. Crediting of traditional Indigenous foods that contribute to the meal pattern requirements but are not listed in the FBG may be determined using either of these methods: 1) using yield information of a similar food; or 2) conducting an in-house yield study.

1. In these occurrences, traditional Indigenous food may credit like similar products found in the FBG, as discussed in [TA-01 2024: Crediting Traditional Indigenous Foods in Child Nutrition Programs](#). For example, the FBG contains yield information for canned and pouched non-smoked salmon, the same yield may be used to determine the credit for red (sockeye) salmon.
2. When traditional Indigenous foods that contribute toward the meal pattern requirements are not listed and are not similar to another food in the FBG, in-house yields may be developed and used. Instructions for developing in-house yields are available online in the “About the Food Buying Guide” section on the home page of the FBG at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>.

**Q: For Objective #4, can you clarify whether the cooperators must create new material or if it is ok for them to use existing material that they have?**

*Objective #4: Develop culturally relevant nutrition education materials for students to accompany the traditional Indigenous foods that are served as part of their meals; train school nutrition professionals and other school staff on providing culturally relevant nutrition education to students; and ensure that nutrition education is delivered to students. 50% or more of those providing nutrition education directly to students must be members of Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Native Hawaiians.*

A: No, all materials do not have to be created by the cooperators. Cooperators may use existing materials, develop new materials, or adapt materials created by other organizations such as USDA.

**Q: What is the difference between a School Food Authority (SFA) and a school district?**

A: When USDA refers to an SFA, we are referring to the entity that oversees the implementation of the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). In most cases, an SFA is a school district. If a school district is implementing the CNP, then they are considered an SFA. There are school districts across the nation that do not offer the CNP, and thus they are not considered SFAs.