

2006 Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Innovation Grants Program

Exploring Food Assistance and Nutrition Issues Among the South's Vulnerable Populations

Deadline Date: Postmarked by June 23, 2006



The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is pleased to announce its continued support for food and nutrition-related research focusing on the South. As in past years, the program is designed to support innovative social sciences-related research that advances our knowledge and understanding of food assistance and nutrition issues impacting vulnerable populations in the South. The Economic Research Service remains a valuable partner with the SRDC in supporting this important work.

The maximum amount allowed for any proposal is now \$35,000. Individuals submitting proposals will be allowed to include up to 10% indirect cost rate in their budget request. However, the total cost of the project must not exceed the \$35,000 level. ***Please note that the list of topics has undergone some changes and includes new areas of research. An area of added interest in this year's grant program is a focus on the hurricane-impacted areas of the South.***

This document provides specific guidelines for individuals wishing to submit a formal proposal to the SRDC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

KEY INFORMATION

PROGRAM TITLE:	<i>Exploring Food Assistance and Nutrition Issues Among the South's Vulnerable Populations</i>
FUNDING AGENCY:	Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with the Economic Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture
GRANT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF RESEARCH:	Seed funding, in an amount not to exceed \$35,000 per project, will be awarded to projects of scientific merit that address important social science aspects of food assistance issues in the South. Indirect costs of up to 10% will be allowed.
DEADLINE:	Proposals must be postmarked no later than June 23, 2006
AWARD NOTIFICATION:	August 11, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As in past years, the 2006 food assistance competitive grants program of the Southern Rural Development Center will continue to focus on the Southern region as the geographic area of interest for its research investments. This is warranted in light of the fact that this region remains home for the largest number of rural residents, contains the lion's share of our nation's nonmetro counties, represents the most impoverished region of the country, and faces some of the most difficult health, nutrition, and food security-related challenges of any region in the country. Moreover, the large influx of Latino/Hispanics into rural areas of the region adds an important new wrinkle to this year's grant program – a need to explore the food assistance/food security challenges facing areas of the South that are undergoing (or have undergone) important racial, ethnic, and/or other demographic shifts. An additional area of interest in this year's innovative grants program is research

that explores the unique food security and food assistance challenges facing individuals and households/families directly impacted by the major hurricanes of 2005 (i.e., Katrina and Rita), especially those located in the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi or Texas.

RESEARCH THEMES/TOPICS:

The SRDC is seeking proposals that address any one (or more) of the following research topics. (NOTE: If appropriate, grantees are encouraged to tap existing secondary data sources to explore their research questions).

1. **HIGH POVERTY AREAS**

- Exploring patterns and/or outcomes of food/nutrition assistance programs among individuals living in “persistently poor” or “high poverty” counties of the South, especially those living in the Black Belt, Mid South Delta, Texas Rio Grande, and/or Appalachian regions of the South.

2. **DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS**

- Examining the food assistance and nutrition challenges facing communities/counties that have experienced major racial, ethnic, or other demographic changes within the past decade. Such research could include assessments of key strategies that have been launched to tackle the food assistance/nutrition needs or program participation of these important population subgroups.

3. **OBESITY AND NUTRITION ISSUES**

- Exploring the prevalence of, and factors associated with, obesity among various populations in the South (such as children, elderly, the poor, racial/ethnic minorities). This may include efforts to explore the links between participation in food assistance/nutrition programs (or levels of food security) and certain outcomes, such as overweight/obesity status, diet quality, and/or overall health.
- Identifying and documenting the impact of expanded access in schools to healthy food offerings on students’ overall health status and school performance. Also of interest are assessments of the impact of expanded (or reducing) school-based physical education programs/activities on the health status of children.

4. **USE OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

- Assessing the current use of food assistance programs across metropolitan, micropolitan, and noncore-based populations, and documenting key factors that have altered the use of such programs over time.
- Evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of various food programs (such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the school breakfast and/or lunch programs, Food Stamp Program, etc.) on the target populations.

5. **ACCESS TO QUALITY FOODS**

- Exploring factors that facilitate or impede access to healthy and diverse food products by low-income individuals or households living in various sized places (such as communities located in remote rural counties, and/or those located in nonmetro micropolitan counties).

6. **NEW POLICY OPTIONS**

- Assessing the extent to which the “Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005” are being adopted by low-income individuals/households in the South, and detailing factors that may be contributing to, or inhibiting, their adoption by these individuals/households.
- Examining how new policy options or strategies (either ones that are now under discussion, or ones that could be implemented) might improve or seriously alter the effectiveness and integrity of food assistance-related programs in the South, such as possible changes in the Food Stamps Program, the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, or the WIC Program.

7. HURRICANE IMPACTED AREAS

- Assessing the challenges associated with use of various food assistance-related programs (such as Food Stamps, WIC, school breakfast/lunch programs and child care meals) on the part of people and families/households directly impacted by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita. This could include studies to better determine the set of mechanisms used by hurricane-impacted individuals and families/households to meet their basic food needs. Also of interest is the exploration of food assistance-related policy changes that might be considered to effectively respond to the needs of those directly impacted by natural disasters of this nature.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES:

All proposals must be organized in the following manner.

- **Title of the proposal**
- **The specific research topic(s) being addressed.** Indicate which of the 7 major themes/topics listed under the heading “RESEARCH THEMES/TOPICS” your proposal is most closely aligned with.
- **Principal Investigator(s) and Collaborators.** List the name and institutional affiliation of each research team member. Provide the telephone number, fax number, mailing address, and e-mail address of the Principal Investigator(s).
- **Project Summary.** Provide a 250-word summary of your proposal.
- **Project Description:** This represents the most critical part of your proposal. It should be 6-10 pages in length and should use single-spaced format for the text. Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability. The “Project Description” should include the following:
 1. ***Introduction and Problem Statement:*** Provide an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the research problem of interest in your study. In addition, specify what your research proposal will do to further advance our understanding of this specific food assistance or nutrition related issue in the South.
 2. ***Objectives:*** Identify the specific research objectives to be pursued in your project.
 3. ***Research Methods:*** Describe the research methodology to be undertaken for each objective. If sampling is being proposed, provide a strong rationale as to the relevance of the site(s) selected for your research investigation. If an existing data set is being utilized, discuss the quality and relevance of this data source in addressing the subject of your proposal.
 4. ***Data Analysis:*** Indicate the statistical procedures that you anticipate using for your data analysis.
 5. ***Application of the Research Results:*** Provide an assessment of the relevance your research might have in terms of its contribution to the scientific literature and/or its relevance to policy and/or practice (that is, what does it imply with regard to policy or program shifts that may be needed to further strengthen food assistance or nutrition efforts in the South?).
 6. ***Project Timeline:*** Provide a timeline of activities to be completed over the course of the project. PLEASE note the allowable time period for your project as noted in the “Project Duration” section below.
 7. ***Proposed Budget:*** Specify the anticipated budget expenditures for your project and include a brief justification for these budget expenditures. As noted earlier, only a 10% indirect cost is allowed. **PLEASE NOTE** that the budget must include funds for ONE person (typically the project PI) to participate in a two-day research conference being organized by the Economic Research Service in Washington, DC for late Fall 2007.

- **Relevant Experiences of Researcher(s) and Curriculum Vita:** Briefly highlight the type of past activities that the applicant(s) has been engaged in that are relevant to the proposed research project. This could include a listing of relevant publications, reports, and contributed papers. An abbreviated curriculum vita (of approximately 3-4 pages) of the Principal Investigator(s) should be included with the project proposal packet.

PROJECT DURATION:

All awardees will have 15 months to complete the proposed project. Projects will begin no later than October 1, 2006, and will terminate on December 14, 2007.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The SRDC's *Rural South Food Assistance Research Task Force* will be involved in reviewing all grant proposals. An Economic Research Service research team will offer input as well. All proposals will be judged using the following criteria:

1. The scientific merit of the proposed research (30 percent);
2. Its relevance to food assistance/nutrition issues, particularly in the South (25 percent);
3. The soundness of the methodology being proposed (20 percent);
4. The potential contribution of the research in informing policy discussions at federal, regional, state and/or local level and/or in refining program outreach/delivery activities (15 percent); and,
5. The qualifications of the individual or team who will provide leadership to the research effort (10 percent).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please feel free to contact Vicki Vaughn (vickiv@srcd.msstate.edu) or Bo Beaulieu (ljb@srcd.msstate.edu) by email or by calling the SRDC office (662-325-3207).

MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS: (NOTE: No faxed or emailed copies will be allowed)

Please send three (3) copies of your proposal to the SRDC. If you plan to mail your proposal by regular mail, please use the following address:

Southern Rural Development Center
Box 9656
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9656

If you will be sending your proposal by overnight delivery, please use the following mailing address:

Southern Rural Development Center
410 Bost Extension Building
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Telephone: 662-325-3207

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DOCUMENT MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN
JUNE 23, 2006**