



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

The RCPNC is accepting grant applications for projects that use creative strategies to improve coordination among USDA-FNS Child Nutrition programs and other nutrition assistance programs. Projects should aim to increase program participation rates among families with children in 324 persistently poor rural counties in 15 states. Grant funding will enable communities to better coordinate the programs of various nutrition assistance programs, which is expected to result in improved program participation rates.

Examples of USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs include:

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)*
- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)*
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)*
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)*
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

*Note: USDA-FNS Child Nutrition Program

Award Amount

The RCPNC will award selected grantees up to \$100,000 to support projects that use creative strategies to increase coordination among USDA-FNS Child Nutrition programs and other nutrition assistance programs. While the maximum amount that can be requested for consideration under an individual grant application is \$100,000, the minimum amount that can be requested is \$50,000. Up to 25 applicants will be selected for awards.

Applicant Eligibility

Government or non-profit organizations at the state or local (city or county) level located in 324 counties in the 15 states with the highest number of persistently poor counties may apply for funding to support project implementation. A list of eligible counties can be found at www.rcpnc.org.

Application Deadline and Project Duration

Applications will be accepted until September 30, 2015. Selected applicants will be notified before the anticipated grant start date in November/December 2015. The grant period ends March 31, 2019.



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS DEADLINE:
Must be received by September 30, 2015



Application Requirements

Letter of Intent. While it is not mandatory, we *highly recommend* that all applicants who are interested in submitting an application fill out the online Letter of Intent available at <http://j.mp/1eYLapJ>. The Letter of Intent *does not* obligate candidates to complete the application. The information it provides allows RCPNC personnel to confirm the applicant's eligibility as well as prepare for the review and selection process. Eligible applicants intending to submit an application are encouraged to submit Letters of Intent by September 1, 2015.

Applicants who have limited access to the Internet may send a Letter of Intent by mail. If they do so, their Letter of Intent should, at a minimum, provide the following information:

1. Principal investigator or lead coordinator (first and last name)
2. Organization name
3. Organization type (state or local government/non-profit)
4. Address
5. County (Must be one of the 324 counties listed at www.rcpnc.org)
6. Telephone number
7. Email address of the principal investigator or lead coordinator
8. Request for a paper copy of the application

Written Letters of Intent should be mailed to:

Joann Lianekhammy
Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center
University of Kentucky
School of Human Environmental Sciences
107 Erikson Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0054

RFA Online Application. The RFA is an online application that allows those with little to no grant writing experience the opportunity to competitively submit an application. An application help guide, downloadable through the online application, helps applicants complete the application's more technical questions. The application requests information about community resources, organizational capacity, and existing collaborations. It also asks grant applicants to describe how their proposed project will creatively increase coordination efforts among various nutrition programs, as well as rates of participation in those programs in their community over the long term. A timeline of project activities, a budget, and budget narrative that justifies project expenses are also required. Projects should use community-involvement models and also address barriers that prevent families with children from enrolling in nutrition programs. Research has identified four barriers to participation in various nutrition programs. Projects may be focused on one or more of these barriers:

- **Information and Awareness.** A lack of knowledge often prevents otherwise eligible families from participating in programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC),



School Lunch, and School Breakfast. Providing this information can be difficult and requires coordination among different nutrition programs.

- ***Physical Access.*** In rural areas, physical access often presents challenges to those who need these programs. Children who rely on rural bus routes to travel to school, or who travel by other means, may find it difficult to get to school early enough for school breakfast programs. Access to high quality and inexpensive food is also a major concern.
- ***Community Resources.*** Insufficient community resources also play a crucial role, especially in providing school breakfast, lunch, and summer meal programs. For example, some schools may not have the physical capacity to house lunch programs.
- ***Social Stigma.*** Social stigma is a well-known issue in providing aid to those in poverty. The poor are often stigmatized when they use identifiable cards or vouchers from programs such as SNAP or WIC to purchase food in public stores and farmers' markets. The greater community's lack of understanding of the programs can create social stigma.

To complete the online application, click on or copy and paste the following link to your web browser: <http://j.mp/1FOQPER>. The link to the online application can also be found at www.rcpnc.org. Special accommodations will be made for applicants who have limited access to broadband Internet service. Applicants should request a paper copy of the application and a *RCPNC Application Help Guide* in their Letter of Intent.

Project Strategies

The Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center seeks innovative outreach strategies that use community involvement to improve coordination among USDA-FNS Child Nutrition programs and other nutrition assistance programs. The goal in improving coordination is to increase participation in those programs.

When grant funding ends, additional funding will not be provided, so all proposed projects should be self-sustaining. Ideas for sustainable strategies may involve, but are not exclusive to, the following areas:

1. Identifying and applying effective models of sustained nutrition program coordination through community involvement.
2. Improving outreach through more effective uses of technology and digital media and/or advances in communications and coordination.
3. Engaging program participants to lead cross-program coordination efforts.

Funding Expectations

Selected applicants are at a minimum obligated to use funds to attend two FNS conferences held in Alexandria, VA, conduct a needs assessment in their community, and implement strategies based on needs. A full list of grantee obligations is provided in Box 1.



Workshops. RCPNC training and assistance will provide grantees with the tools they need to effectively implement and manage projects. For this reason, it is mandatory that a minimum of two people from each grant participate in webinar training and attend two workshops at the USDA-FNS headquarters in Alexandria, VA held at a date to be announced in 2015 and in March 2019. Travel costs for attending both grantee workshops must be included in the application budget.

Needs Assessment. During the first workshop, the RCPNC will train grantees to complete a needs assessment in their community. Results of the assessment will provide a better understanding of the needs and barriers to accessing healthy foods for low-income families with children. To better understand community needs and barriers, grantees will collect input from a broad set of stakeholders and community members using surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Grantees will learn how to prioritize the identified needs. Based on the results of the needs assessment, strategies proposed during the application process will be refined and implemented.

Assistance with Data Collection.

Although no previous experience working with data is required, the RCPNC does seek applicants who are open to learning about data collection and who are committed to providing information that will help RCPNC researchers evaluate the impact of coordination strategies.

The grantee will be responsible for working with the RCPNC evaluation team to obtain and collect two sources of data. The first will be county caseload data, as it relates to projects, on the seven USDA nutrition programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Data prior to the grant, as well as data throughout the grant period, is needed. The RCPNC will help grantees obtain this data through state and local government contacts.

Second, the grantee will work with the RCPNC evaluation team to conduct a survey of the target population of the nutrition assistance programs. With input from the grantee, the evaluation team will design the survey to highlight and measure the project’s efficacy. Basic demographic and

Box 1

Grantee Obligations

- Attend two workshops
- Conduct a needs assessment within their community
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase participation in nutrition programs based on the needs assessment
- Assist RCPNC with collecting data to conduct evaluation of projects
- Participate in monthly conference calls, webinars, and site visits (if deemed necessary)
- Interact and share ideas with other selected grantees
- Complete quarterly project reports using provided report templates
- Submit a timely final report, including any final adaptations, models, and strategies developed under the RFA
- Share project results at the final workshop



program usage data will also be collected through the survey. The RCPNC will make the survey available in printed form and online. The grantee will help identify and encourage responses.

The RCPNC realizes that applicants may lack the knowledge and infrastructure to meet minimum obligations. However, all grantees will be provided with training, assistance, and clear guidance from the RCPNC to successfully fulfill these requirements.

Scoring Guidelines

A diverse team of nationally recruited experts will serve as reviewers for the RCPNC applications. The RCPNC Review Team will include representatives of FNS Child Nutrition programs, anti-hunger specialists, higher education faculty, and frontline personnel working with implementing agencies. They will use a scorecard to evaluate grant applications. The scorecard is based on evaluation factors and criteria that closely reflect the goals and objectives of the RCPNC. Applications will be ranked according to overall score, and the highest-ranked applications out of a possible 100 points will be recommended to RCPNC officials for further consideration. Up to 25 grantees will be selected based on the ranking. However, the RCPNC reserves the right to make an award out of rank order to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, and project diversity. Applications for areas that serve a population that is 50% or higher Native American or Tribal District will be weighted more heavily in the selection process. The scorecard can be found on the next page.



Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center Application Scorecard

Need and Organizational Capacity	
These items assess the documented need and ability of the applying organization to further implement projects successfully as well as overcome challenges that may arise through the grant period.	Possible Score: 30 pts
❖ Applicant demonstrates community’s need for this grant funding. Consider current community’s nutrition assistance program participation rates if provided.	0-10
❖ Applicant demonstrates openness to learning about data collection and commitment to providing information that will help RCPNC researchers evaluate the impact of coordination strategies.	0-5
❖ Applicant demonstrates ability to fulfill grant project expectations. Organization has the infrastructure to manage funded projects organizationally, administratively, and fiscally.	0-10
❖ Project staff members hold relevant qualifications and experience and their proposed roles or responsibilities are appropriate.	0-5
Project Collaboration and Partnerships	
The criteria for this section reflect best practices for enhancing and sustaining collaboration between agencies.	Possible Score: 20 pts
❖ Applicant proposes partnerships with appropriate agencies necessary to implement the proposed project, and if they haven’t had partnerships, demonstrates an understanding of barriers that prevented them from developing partnerships in the past. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership includes delivering agency from a FNS Child Nutrition program. ○ Project roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined and agreed upon by all collaborating partners. 	0-10
❖ Letter(s) of Support were provided by the applying organization and all partnering organizations, including agencies that will be targeted for improved coordination. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter(s) of Support show strong commitment from all partners to collaborate with the applying organization and assist with obtaining relevant data for evaluation. 	0-5
❖ Letter(s) of Support by federal, state, or local legislators/officials demonstrate strong commitment toward reducing child hunger.	0-5



Project Proposal	
Project plans should be clearly described and focus on ways to improve coordination strategies of nutrition assistance programs within their service area.	Possible Score: 35 pts
❖ The potential for applicant’s proposed strategies to improve coordination between targeted nutrition assistance programs in its service area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategies in the proposal are aimed at overcoming common barriers to nutrition assistance program participation. 	0-10
❖ Strategies proposed involve community involvement.	0-5
❖ Project outcomes are sustainable beyond the grant.	0-5
❖ The project timeline specifies clear tasks relevant to achieving project goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tasks are set within a realistic timeframe. 	0-5
❖ Estimates are appropriate for the scope of the described project.	0-10

Need for Infrastructure	
Counties that demonstrate a strong need for resources and capacity building will receive additional consideration for funding. The applicant's need will be assessed based on barriers to program participation, demographics, poverty rates, rates of program participation, geographic location, and existing resources in their service area.	Possible Score: 15 pts

Total possible score: 100

Comments: