

United States
Department of
Agriculture



Economic
Research
Service



Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program

Fiscal 2002

Competitive Grants and Cooperative
Agreements Program: Description
and Application Process



*Food Assistance &
Nutrition Research Program*

Checklist

All proposals submitted under the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) must contain the applicable elements described in this brochure. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the proposal is complete and in the proper order prior to mailing:

- ✓ Application for Funding Cover Page
 - Is all required information accurate and complete?
 - Has the Principal Investigator and the authorized organizational representative signed the Cover Page?
 - Is this a developmental award application?
 - Does one copy contain pen-and-ink signatures?
 - Have you included a telephone number, fax number, and/or e-mail address where a message may be left for you?
 - ✓ Table of Contents
 - Are page numbers included for each item?
 - ✓ Project Summary
 - Has the Project Summary been included?
 - Do the name and institution of the Principal Investigator and co-investigators appear on the page, or on the following page?
 - Does it include research objectives?
 - Is it no more than 250 words?
 - ✓ Project Description
 - Is the project fully described?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations, as specified?
 - Does this section begin as page 1, as specified?
 - Does it contain a tentative schedule or workplan of major steps of study?
 - ✓ Citations to Project Description
 - Are all references cited?
 - Are all citations referenced?
 - Do all citations contain a title and are they in accepted journal format?
 - ✓ Documentation from Collaborator(s), or Host Institution (where appropriate)
 - ✓ Vitae and Publications List(s)
 - Are vitae included for the Principal Investigator and co-investigators, senior associates, and other key project personnel (including subcontractors—see instructions)?
 - Are the vitae current and pertinent?
 - Are the publications lists complete and limited to the last 5 years?
 - ✓ Budget (form ARS-455)
 - Are budget items complete?
 - Is the summary budget included?
 - Is the funding level total in line N within the stated limit of \$400,000 for the 3-year duration of the project proposal?
 - Is the budget duration within the stated limit of 3 years?
 - ✓ Indirect Cost Rate Schedule
 - For reimbursement of indirect costs, is a copy included of the applicant's indirect cost rate schedule that reports the applicant's federally negotiated audited rate?
 - ✓ General
 - Does the proposal conform to all format and page limitations and deadline requirements?
 - Are there an original and 12 copies?
 - Are all copies complete?
-

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Overview

Applications are invited for competitive grant and cooperative agreement awards from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for fiscal 2002. This document provides background on the research areas of interest to the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP), application procedures, deadlines for submission, and guidance for the application process.

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) anticipates awarding approximately \$2 million in fiscal 2002 for competitive grants and cooperative agreements. ERS will accept proposals under this program for funding levels, inclusive of indirect cost when applicable, between \$100,000 and \$400,000 (for the duration of the grant and/or the cooperative agreement, not to exceed 3 years). ERS will also consider supporting up to three research projects in the range of \$100,000 to \$150,000 for the development of expertise by newly-graduated researchers or by senior researchers who are new to food assistance and nutrition issues. Applications intended for consideration of a developmental award must state that intention in the cover page. Parties interested in smaller grants should consult the FANRP website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/funding>

Authority

The authority for this program is contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, Fiscal 2002 (P.L. 107-76). Under this program, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary may award competitive grants and cooperative agreements for the support of research projects to further USDA programs, especially the Food Stamp Program (FSP), Child Nutrition Programs (School Breakfast, National School Lunch, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food Program), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Proposals may be submitted by any State agricultural experiment station, college, university, other research institution or organization, Federal agencies, private organization, corporation, or individual.

Applicable Federal Statutes, Regulations, and Guidelines

Applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and guidelines include the following: (a) guidelines to be followed when submitting grant proposals and cooperative agreements and rules governing the evaluation of proposals; (b) the USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations, 7 CFR 3019; (c) the USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, 7 CFR Part 3015; (d) the USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, 7 CFR Part 3016; and (e) Cooperative Research Agreement 7 USC 3318b.

Priority Research Areas

ERS is accepting proposals for support of high-priority research of importance to USDA's food assistance and nutrition programs in five research areas. Proposals should focus on research and evaluation studies that have direct implications for USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs. Anticipated funding in fiscal 2002 for competitive grants and cooperative agreements will be approximately \$2 million.

The five Priority Research Areas listed below highlight the research priorities for which ERS has determined that competitive grants or cooperative agreements are appropriate. ERS is especially interested in proposals that make use of existing data, such as the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Survey of Program Dynamics (SPD), the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals (CSFII), the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES), the National Food Stamp Program Survey (NFSPS), the National Health and Nutrition Education Survey (NHANES), or the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), or the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K). Of particular interest are those proposals that use existing longitudinal data or that make creative and innovation linkages between data sets, such as links between administrative data sets from various USDA programs or links between administrative and survey data. The suggested topics and questions discussed below within each Priority Research Area are not meant to be exhaustive. Applicants may propose other topics within any of the Priority Research Areas, but they must provide persuasive justifications for those topics in their proposals.

FANRP has a wide variety of ongoing research projects. To avoid duplication, applicants are encouraged to read project descriptions in the *Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program, Final Report: Fiscal 2001 Activities* or in the FANRP Project Database. The report and the FANRP Project Database are available on the FANRP website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/fanrp>. In addition, the site contains information on various data sets that are available for food and nutrition assistance research at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/funding>.

Applicants may address multiple issues, but must specify one of the five priority research areas below:

- I. Program Design and Operations
 - A. Program Access, Targeting, and Eligibility Factors
 - B. Multiple Program Interactions
 - C. Service Delivery, Costs, and Effectiveness
- II. Food Assistance as a Safety Net
 - A. Food Security, Food Spending, and Food Assistance Participation
 - B. Coping with Constrained Resources
- III. Obesity
 - A. Development of Eating Patterns and Obesity
 - B. Short-term and Long-term Costs of Overweight and Obesity
 - C. Understanding the Role of Food Assistance Programs in Preventing Obesity
- IV. Eating Patterns, Diet Quality, and Health Outcomes
 - A. Eating Patterns and Diet Quality
 - B. Food Assistance Program Participation, Diet Quality, and Health Outcomes
 - C. Understanding the Diets of Teenage Girls



V. Behavioral Nutrition

A. The Economics of Nutrition Behavior

B. Evaluation Design and Methodology for Large-scale Nutrition Education Programs

C. Market Segmentation, Message Development, and Outreach

I. Program Design and Operations

A. *Program Access, Targeting, and Eligibility Factors*

The amount of food stamp benefits received by a participating household is determined by a complicated formula that takes into account the household's countable income and allowable deductions for expenses. Many of the deductions (e.g., child care, excess medical, excess shelter) were introduced legislatively to better target Food Stamp Program (FSP) benefits. However, these deductions do not seem to be taken by many who are eligible to use them. Studies to explore the extent of this problem, including the reasons why available deductions are not used and how the benefit formula might be simplified, would be helpful. Research is also needed to determine which aspects of the benefit determination process are the most cumbersome for local food stamp workers to administer, and to forecast the distributional and FSP participation consequences of potential changes to the formula.

It has been suggested that increased targeting of WIC services to higher-risk participants may increase program effectiveness. Currently, WIC State agencies may classify selected participants as "high risk;" these participants may be offered more extensive and more individualized services than other WIC participants. FANRP is interested in research that examines the costs and benefits of increased targeting of WIC services through this or other mechanisms.

Discussions of restoration of FSP benefits to immigrants in the United States would be better informed if there were more findings about food assistance usage and general conditions of immigrant families, especially those with citizen children. For example, 16 States have used State funds to provide food stamps for individuals made ineligible for the Federal FSP since welfare reform passed in 1996. Caseload and expenditure data from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) only include information on participants in the Federal program. Research to establish and analyze a time-series database on recipients and expenditures in State-funded programs for different categories of non-citizens would be helpful.

Policy actions with respect to the food stamp Employment and Training (E&T) program and FSP work requirements have been frequent even though it is not well-documented that a sizable contingent of long-term FSP clients exists who do not have earnings and/or job skills. In 1997 only 9 percent of the FSP caseload was made up of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDS) and about half of these were either complying with work requirements or exempt from requirements. Further work is needed to use longitudinal data (e.g., Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)) to identify the prevalence and characteristics of long-term FSP clients subject to work requirements and/or eligible for food stamp E&T activities. Some State and local FSP administrators complain that FSP work requirements are cumbersome to implement and that E&T funding restrictions limit the ability of program staff to assist all households in the transition from welfare to work. Research on the pervasiveness and strength of these potential problems is encouraged.

B. Multiple Program Interactions

As U.S. economic activity has slowed in recent months, time limits have become a factor for increasing numbers of long-term Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients, while the prospects of replacing cash benefits with earnings have become less likely. Some TANF clients who made the transition from welfare to work have recently lost jobs and earnings. Research is needed to determine how this conjunction of time limits and recession has affected food stamp participation and the wellbeing of families who formerly relied on TANF. It would be of interest to know how usage of other Federal food assistance programs (e.g., school meals, WIC, Child and Adult Care Food Program) and the emergency food assistance system responds to the needs of families with recently unemployed members or families who have lost cash benefits due to time limits.

In the 1990s, a rapid increase in the percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries receiving health-care services through managed-care providers reduced the number of public health departments serving low-income women and children directly. This reduction presents new challenges to WIC agencies. The loss of co-location of WIC and health-care services has complicated the identification of WIC-eligible individuals and the coordination of WIC nutrition education with health care. Research is needed to quantify the impact of the dissociation of WIC and Medicaid services on program participation and effectiveness. FANRP is also interested in understanding the barriers to better integration of WIC services as well as the costs and benefits of alternative practices.

Although FSP caseloads expand and contract with economic cycles, on average only 2 percent of the FSP caseload receives unemployment income (UI) payments. Even during the recession of the early 1990s, at most 3.2 percent of FSP cases (in 1993) reported receiving UI. Research is needed to determine the extent to which this reflects eligibility factors (e.g., the FSP assets tests, generosity of UI payments), stigma, lack of knowledge, or procedural burdens associated with UI and/or FSP receipt. Are there legislative changes or administrative alternatives (e.g., co-location of UI and FSP offices) suggested by research that could improve the ability of the FSP to support temporarily unemployed workers?

C. Service Delivery, Costs, and Effectiveness

The elderly face a variety of barriers to consuming a nutritious diet. Food-preparation difficulties, transportation limitations, social isolation, and health problems mean that, for some segments of the elderly population, the provision of food alone may not be sufficient to ensure consumption of a nutritious diet. FANRP would like to encourage research (preferably using existing data) to stratify the elderly on the basis of their barriers to a nutritious diet, to identify the relative sizes of these strata, and to suggest the combinations of services that may be most effective in overcoming these barriers for different groups. In addition, research is encouraged on the cost-effectiveness of the various approaches to delivering food assistance, nutrition, and related services as a means of allowing vulnerable elderly to continue to live independently, thereby delaying or avoiding the need for costly institutional care.

During the caseload declines of the late 1990s, FSP administrative costs increased on a per case basis. Research is needed to determine the extent to which this is a general cyclical pattern and/or a result of changes taking place in welfare offices in response to welfare reform. Studies of the relationships among administrative costs, error rates, and other indicators of program performance are also of interest.

Recent regulatory changes have offered a number of options for reducing the burden of FSP application and participation (e.g., expanded categorical eligibility, universal quarterly reporting, 6-month reporting for those with earnings, and transitional food stamps for welfare



leavers.) Additional FSP administrative changes have been debated in conjunction with legislation to reauthorize the FSP program. Research is needed to determine if these recent regulatory and legislative changes are having their intended effects. Such research includes studies that examine how options and new policies are being implemented as well as studies that broadly examine the social costs and benefits of alternative administrative practices.

Also of interest are: estimation of the time and money costs to participants of complying with program procedures and rules; the impact of this burden on FSP participation and other work support programs; the administrative costs of specific practices (e.g., application processing, benefit determination, recertification, change reporting, case management); the burden on administrators and benefit savings attributed to quality control procedures; other potential benefits to taxpayers and the general public associated with administrative practices. Case studies may be useful to reveal potential shortcomings of new policies and to suggest how States can learn from successful implementation of new options and policies in other areas.

II. Food Assistance as a Safety Net

A. Food Security, Food Spending, and Food Assistance Participation

Since 1995, USDA has sponsored annual Food Security Supplements (FSS) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) to assess the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in the United States. Food security measures have also been incorporated into other national surveys (e.g., ECLS, SPD, PSID, NFSPS, and National Survey of WIC Participants (NSWP)).

FANRP wishes to support research examining the causes and consequences of food insecurity using those survey data. Studies that explore the role of food and nutrition assistance programs in improving food security are of interest, as is research that examines the demographic and programmatic factors that may explain why some participating households find it difficult to sustain food security. However, such research needs to specifically address statistical issues of selection bias and simultaneity. Further research is also needed to better understand the temporal patterns of food insecurity across years and across population subgroups. Finally, studies using those data to link nutritional, behavioral, and educational outcome measures with food security status and food assistance program use are of interest.

The additional economic resources provided by FSP benefits increase participants' food-purchasing power. However, studies of dietary patterns have shown these additional resources, by themselves, may not substantially change the nutritional quality of participants' diets. A better understanding of the links among FSP participation, benefit levels, shopping patterns, and food expenditures would contribute to the design of nutrition education that could promote more informed food choices by FSP participants. Substantial new data on food expenditure of U.S. households have been collected since 1995 in the context of the CPS-FSS.

Analysis of those data is encouraged to study methodological improvements in measuring food expenditures, food spending patterns by store type, and distribution of expenditures between at-home and away-from-home food purchases. Also of interest is research examining the relationships among these measures, FSP participation, and FSP benefit levels. Studies of food security and food spending drawing on labor force information from the core CPS are also encouraged.

Incorporating measures of the frequency and duration of food insecurity and hunger in the assessment of food security may be important for understanding food insecurity and hunger and their causes and consequences. Development of multidimensional measures of food security incorporating both severity and duration, and research that relates those measures to causes and consequences of food insecurity and hunger are of interest.

B. Coping With Constrained Resources

When facing constrained resources, households make choices and undertake strategies as they try to meet their household's basic needs, including food intake. These strategies include adjustments to diet quality and quantity, trading off food expenditures against expenditures for other (nonfood) necessities, drawing on support from friends and family, drawing on community emergency food assistance resources, and participating in State and Federal cash welfare and food and nutrition assistance programs. Data on many of these behavioral responses to constrained resources for food are now available in the CPS-FSS which can be matched with the monthly core CPS labor files and the March Annual Demographic Supplement. Longitudinal data from the core SIPP panel surveys (including the Well-Being Supplement data) and the SPD also offer potential for studying these issues. In general, research is needed to integrate this information into a comprehensive picture of how households of various kinds combine these strategies and resources to meet their food needs and how effective these strategies are at reducing the more severe forms of food insecurity and hunger.

For households that report more severe manifestations of food insecurity (i.e. households where adults and/or children skip meals and/or go whole days without eating), analyses would be welcomed to document the frequency and duration of these experiences as well as the psychological and socioeconomic factors that prevent such households from adopting adequate coping strategies.

III. Obesity

A. Development of Eating Patterns and Obesity

A number of studies have identified relationships between obesity and such factors as dietary patterns, episodic food insecurity, and physical activity levels. However, little is known about these relationships. For example, does a low physical-activity level lead to the development of obesity, or does obesity lead to a reduced level of physical activity? Research insights into the factors associated with the development of eating patterns and obesity would benefit from a long-term perspective. Such perspective may be obtained through use of longitudinal data from multiyear studies—such as MR. FIT, the Framingham Study, the Nurses' Health Study, the ECLS-K, or the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's Growth and Health Study—or by combining multiple years of cross-sectional data to create synthetic cohorts. FANRP encourages research to identify factors associated with the development of obesity using existing data sets that employ such a long-term perspective.

B. Short-term and Long-term Costs of Overweight and Obesity

The prevalence of overweight and obesity continues to rise in the United States, yet little research has been conducted to quantify the health and economic consequences associated with this alarming trend. This makes it difficult to value the benefits of interventions that aim to prevent or reduce the incidence of obesity. FANRP is interested in research that estimates the short- and long-term public and private social, economic, and health costs of overweight and obesity among children, adolescents, and/or adults in the United States, especially within low-income populations.



C. Understanding the Role of Food Assistance Programs in Preventing Obesity

Given the large role in many Americans' diets of USDA food assistance programs such as WIC, the Food Stamp Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and the National School Lunch Program (which can also provide after-school snacks), FANRP is interested in better understanding how these programs could help prevent development of obesity. It would also be useful to better understand the extent to which any program effects could be attributed to specific program aspects, such as direct improvement of diet, provision of nutrition education, and/or promotion of behaviors associated with obesity prevention (e.g., physical activity). Research is encouraged that makes use of existing datasets that include information on children's weight status and activity levels, such as the ECLS-K and NHANES IV.

IV. Eating Patterns, Diet Quality, and Health Outcomes

A. Eating Patterns and Diet Quality

Diet quality depends on an individual's overall pattern of choices of specific foods. Some of these food choices may be made based on how well foods substitute for or complement each other. For example, soft drinks may be substituted for other beverages, such as milk, while breakfast cereals are usually consumed with milk. Major patterns of food substitution or complementarity may create eating patterns with important effects on overall diet quality. Eating patterns may vary considerably among diverse socioeconomic and demographic groups. Lifestyle and household structure characteristics may also play a role, e.g., being a single, employed parent may influence food choices. Research is needed to identify eating pattern typologies that are associated with diet quality, and link these to socioeconomic and lifestyle characteristics, including food assistance program participation. In addition, FANRP encourages research that would provide insights into the types of changes that may be more effective in improving diet quality for specific population subgroups. This research may include modeling approaches to determine optimal strategies for diet improvement, given a group's preferences and resource constraints. Research using existing data on individual or household food consumption patterns, information, preferences and constraints—such as the NFSPS or NHANES IV—is encouraged.

B. Food Assistance Program Participation, Diet Quality, and Health Outcomes

While it is well-accepted that diets high in fruits and vegetables reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, less is known about the effects of the overall diet quality and/or of food assistance program participation on health, longevity, and quality of life. Research is encouraged to examine these relationships, preferably using datasets that are nationally representative or representative of important target groups for USDA food and nutrition assistance programs. Also of interest is research that explores the value of the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), or other summary measures of overall diet quality, as predictors of health outcomes.

C. Understanding the Diets of Teenage Girls

Teenage girls tend to have high rates of eating disorders, are more likely to skip meals, are less likely to participate in the NLSP, and tend to have low levels of calcium and iron intake. But the teenage years are an important time from the perspective of nutrition. FANRP encourages research using innovative methodologies to shed light on the barriers teenage girls face in improving the quality of their diets, and potential approaches for effectively overcoming those barriers. Use of innovative methodology to collect qualitative and/or quantitative data from this audience is encouraged, such as through the Web-based surveys or focus groups.

V. Behavioral Nutrition

A. The Economics of Nutrition Behavior

An individual's level of nutrition information has the potential to influence his or her diet quality. But acquisition and use of nutrition information may be influenced by individual characteristics, such as general education, which may also influence diet quality. FANRP is interested in understanding the public and private returns to nutrition information provided through the USDA food assistance programs and how these may be influenced by individual characteristics such as education, income, and time constraints. Investigation of the effects of pricing and other incentive strategies on nutrition behavior is encouraged. Research is also needed on the intertemporal costs and benefits of food choices and how different sociodemographic groups discount the long-term benefits of healthier diets.

B. Evaluation Design and Methodology for Large-scale Nutrition Education Programs

FANRP is interested in developing appropriate study designs and methodologies for the evaluation of large-scale nutrition education programs, such as those offered through the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, WIC, or Team Nutrition at the State, regional, or national level. In addition, research is needed on tools to assess the effectiveness of nutrition education, with special emphasis on tools that avoid the problems of self-report bias. Examples might include linking scanner data to a community intervention, using point-of-sale data from school cafeterias, or using Geographic Information System methods. Other innovative strategies for collecting data such as Web-based focus groups and surveys, or other online data collection methods that could be used at the national, regional, State, or community level, are also of interest.

C. Market Segmentation, Message Development, and Outreach

To develop effective messages and strategies for changing dietary behavior, it is important to understand the food assistance clientele's knowledge, attitudes, constraints, and motivations relating to barriers to healthy eating and increased physical activity. FANRP is interested in funding research to identify and characterize market segments for nutrition education and outreach purposes on the basis of psychosocial and sociodemographic characteristics. Research is also needed to develop and/or evaluate nutrition education messages and strategies tailored to the needs of the identified market segments.



Eligibility Requirements, Award Types, and Indirect and Other Costs

The Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) may award competitive grants or cooperative agreements under this announcement. **Applicants need not specify the type of award in their proposal. FANRP reserves the right to determine the type of award.** The type of award made for a selected proposal will be governed by the nature and degree of involvement desired by FANRP in the project and the type of institution requesting funding (see “Authority,” page 1). In accordance with Federal statutes, the amount of indirect cost ERS will pay is governed by the type of award and the type of institution receiving the award.

Proposals may be submitted by any State agricultural experiment station, college, university, other research institution or organization, Federal, State, or county agencies, private organization, corporation, or individual. Proposals submitted by non-United States organizations will not be considered.

The research proposed must be specifically designed for the five Priority Research Areas described previously. Proposals may include requests for conferences that bring together members of the interested research community to identify research needs, update information, or advance an area of research recognized as an integral part of the research effort.

Types of Awards

- **Competitive Grants:** Competitive grants will be supported when the research topic does not require substantial involvement between ERS staff and the recipient during the performance of the award.
- **Cooperative Agreements:** Cooperative agreements will be supported when the research topic requires more substantial involvement between ERS and the investigator(s). There are two types of cooperative agreements: cooperative research agreements and assistance-type cooperative agreements. In a cooperative research agreement, ERS staff and extramural researchers are close collaborators and contributors to support the research; in an assistance-type cooperative agreement the extramural researchers are responsible for conducting the greater part of the work on the project. Cooperative research agreements require both parties to contribute to the funding of the project; assistance-type cooperative agreements do not have this joint funding requirement.

Indirect and Other Costs

Federal statutes dictate the amount of indirect costs that ERS pays by type of award and institution. In cooperative research agreements, ERS pays: no indirect costs to State cooperative institutions (i.e., land-grant universities and their constituent schools and departments); the negotiated indirect cost rate not to exceed 10 percent of total direct costs to nonprofit institutions other than State cooperative institutions; and the negotiated indirect cost rate not to exceed the audited rate of any federally recognized audit agency to other institutions. In competitive grants and assistance-type cooperative agreements, ERS pays the negotiated indirect cost rate not to exceed the audited rate of any federally recognized audit agency to State cooperative institutions and institutions other than State cooperative institutions and nonprofit institutions; and the negotiated indirect cost rate (no statutory limitation) to nonprofit institutions other than State cooperative institutions. For reimbursement of indirect costs, the applicant must include a copy of its indirect cost rate schedule with the application.

ERS does not pay tuition remission/reimbursement under any type of agreement.



Peer Review of Applications

All proposals received will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgment within 30 days of the submission deadline, please contact the FANRP office at (202) 694-5270 or e-mail: FANRP@ers.usda.gov. Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made for responsiveness to the five Priority Research Areas (for example, relationship of the proposal to one of the five research areas and proposed requirements).

Proposals that do not fall within the guidelines as stated in this document will be eliminated from program competition, and the applicant will be notified in writing.

Peer review panels will be convened to review proposals in each research area. All applicants will be notified in writing by October 31, 2002, as to whether their proposal has been accepted for an award by FANRP.

Peer review panel members will be selected based upon their training and experience in relevant research or technical fields, taking into account the following factors:

- The level of formal social science or technical education and other relevant experience of the individual as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research and other relevant activities;
- The need to include as peer reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant social science or technical fields;
- The need to include as peer reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (for example, universities, industry, private consultant(s), and geographic locations); and
- The need to include as peer reviewers individuals with relevant program knowledge and experience.

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may have an impact on review or evaluation. Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as proposal content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential.



Evaluation Factors and Criteria

The proposal evaluation process includes both internal staff review and evaluation by peer review panels with members drawn from universities, industry, private consultants, and government officials. Peer review panels will be selected and structured to provide expertise and objective judgment in the evaluation of the proposals.

The peer review panel will use the following criteria and weights to evaluate proposals (100 points total):

Research Merit of the Proposal (weight: 35 points)

This criterion is used to assess the conceptual adequacy of the hypothesis or research question, the clarity and delineation of objectives, the adequacy of the description of the undertaking, and how the anticipated results will advance policy knowledge and the development and implementation of programs. Background information should be brief for proposals that address one of the topics described on pages 2-8; a more extensive justification is needed for a proposal with a nonlisted topic.

Overall Approach (weight: 30 points)

This criterion relates to the probability of success of project; time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; analytic approach; and research design, appropriateness of data, and suitability and feasibility of methodology.

Workplan, Budget, and Cost-Effectiveness (weight: 20 points)

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost-effective. Reviewers will evaluate if the workplan is reasonable and sufficient to ensure timely implementation and completion of the study. The workplan should also provide evidence of the adequacy of available or attainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation. When achievement of the workplan requires collaboration, evidence of the adequacy of support from and commitment to cooperation from any collaborative organization.

Key Personnel (weight: 15 points)

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of the key persons who will carry out the project.

How To Obtain Application Materials

FANRP is using the Internet for primary distribution of information and application materials for its Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program. Please note that this document, with a downloadable budget form, is available on the FANRP website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/funding>. Photocopies of materials and the budget form (ARS-455) are acceptable. Paper copies may also be requested from:

Tina Terry-Eley
FANRP/ERS
1800 M Street, NW, Room N2129
Washington, DC 20036-5831
Telephone: (202) 694-5270
Fax: (202) 694-5677
E-mail: FANRP@ers.usda.gov



Application Process

Overview

These guidelines are provided to assist you in preparing a proposal to the Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program of the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program. Please read these guidelines carefully before preparing your submission.

A checklist is provided at the beginning of this document to help you provide the necessary information for completing a proposal. A budget form ARS-455 is required for the proposal, and it may be obtained using the Internet or by requesting a paper copy; contact information is provided on page 12.

Submission Requirements

The purpose of a grant or cooperative agreement proposal is to persuade FANRP and members of the food assistance and nutrition research community who provide advice to FANRP that the proposed project is important, methodologically sound, and worthy of support under the criteria listed on page 11. Therefore, the proposal must be submitted in response to one of the five Priority Research Areas (page 2). The application should be self-contained, should clearly present the merits of the proposed project, and should be written with care and thoroughness. It is important that all essential information for comprehensive evaluation be included. Omissions often result in processing delays and may jeopardize funding opportunities.

In preparing the proposal, applicants are urged to ensure that the name of the Principal Investigator and, where applicable, the name of the submitting institution are included on the Application for Funding Cover Page and **at the top of each page**. This will permit easy identification in the event that the application becomes disassembled during the review process.

Format and Contents of Proposals

Application for Funding Cover Page

Each copy of the proposal must contain an Application for Funding Cover Page. This is designed by the applicant but must be the first page of the application. At least one copy of this information must contain pen-and-ink signatures as outlined below. In completing this cover page include the following information:

- *Title of Proposal.* The title of the proposal must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the project. Because this title will be used to provide information to those who may not be familiar with the proposed project, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as “investigation of” or “research on” should not be used.
- *Statement of Whether This Is a Developmental Award Application.*
- *Program to Which You Are Applying.* “FANRP”
- *Priority Research Area.* Choose the Priority Research Area that is most appropriate to the research being proposed (i.e., Program Design and Operations; Food Assistance as a Safety Net; Obesity; Eating Patterns, Diet Quality, and Health Outcomes; Behavioral Nutrition). It is important that only one research area be selected. When the appropriateness of the chosen research area may be in question, the final program area assignment

will be made by the FANRP staff. The Principal Investigator will be informed of any changes in assigned research area.

- *Principal Investigator/Project Director.* List the name of the proposing Principal Investigator; there can be only one Principal Investigator or Project Director, who must sign the Application for Funding Cover Page. If the proposal has one or more co-investigator(s), all must be listed (signatures of co-investigators are not required) on the Application for Funding Cover Page. Co-investigators should be limited to those required for major research collaboration; minor collaborators or consultants are more appropriately designated as collaborators (see page 16). Only the Principal Investigator listed will receive direct correspondence from FANRP.
- *Type of Institution.* Identify the institution type of the Principal Investigator (awards can be to only one institution or individual); no other designation is accepted: Hispanic-Serving Institution, Land-Grant 1994 (Tribal Colleges and Universities), Land-Grant University 1862, Land-Grant University 1890 or Tuskegee University, Public University or College (Non-Land Grant), Private University or College, Cooperative Extension Service, State Agricultural Experiment Station, USDA/REE Laboratory, Other Federal Research Laboratory, State or Local Government, Minority-Owned Business, Female-Owned Business, Small Business, Private Profit-Making, Private Nonprofit, Individual, Other (specify). Contact your institution's business office if you have any question regarding the proper identification of type of institution.
- *Telephone Numbers.* Please list the telephone and fax numbers and the e-mail addresses (if available) of the Principal Investigator and co-investigators. In addition, please include a telephone number where a message can be left, if different from above.
- *Signatures.* Sign and date the Application for Funding Cover Page. All proposals must be signed by the proposing Principal Investigator and, for those proposals being submitted through institutions or organizations, endorsed by the authorized organizational representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the applicant's time and other relevant resources. The Principal Investigator, who signed the Application for Funding Cover Page, will be listed on the grant or cooperative agreement award document in the event that an award is made. Proposals that do not contain the signature of the authorized organizational representative cannot be considered for support.

Table of Contents

A Table of Contents, itself unpaginated, should be placed immediately after the Application for Funding Cover Page. This table should direct the reader to the pages for all sections of the proposal, beginning with the Project Description on page 1.

Project Summary

The proposal must contain a Project Summary, and must be assembled as the third page of the proposal (immediately after the Table of Contents) and should not be numbered. The names and institutions of the Principal Investigator and all co-investigators should be listed on the summary page (if space is insufficient, please use a separate sheet immediately following the Project Summary in the proposal). The Project Summary is limited to 250 words. The summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language comprehensible by persons in disciplines relating to the food and agricultural sciences. The project summary should be a self-contained, specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on:



- Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; and
- Plans to accomplish project goal(s).

The importance of a concise, informative project summary cannot be overemphasized.

Project Description

The written text may not exceed 15 pages (whether single- or double-spaced) of written text and may not exceed a total of 20 pages including figures and tables. The proposal should be assembled so that the Project Description immediately follows the Project Summary. To clarify page limitation requirements, page numbering for the Project Description should start with 1, and should be placed on the bottom of the page. The 15-page limitation does not include figures, tables, or attachments such as the survey instrument (if relevant). All proposals are to be submitted on standard 8½” x 11” paper. In addition, margins must be at least 1 inch, type size must be 12 point (equivalent to this size for some printers is 10 pitch or 10 characters per inch, which is also acceptable), there should be no more than six (6) lines per inch, and there should be no page reductions. The project description must contain the following components:

- *Introduction.* A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included. The most significant published work in the field under consideration, including the work of key project personnel on the current application, should be reviewed. The current status of research in this field should also be described.
- *Rationale and Significance.* Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research. The objectives’ specific relationship to the potential long-term improvement in the efficiency of the USDA’s food assistance and nutrition programs should be shown clearly. These purposes are described under Priority Research Areas on page 2. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.
- *Research Methods.* The hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology being applied to the proposed project should be stated explicitly. Specifically, this section must include:
 - A description of the research proposed in the sequence in which it is to be performed;
 - Techniques to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the techniques;
 - Explanation of data collection methods, including interviewer training, sample design and selection, and measures for obtaining adequate response rates (for proposed projects that plan to collect survey data);
 - Results expected;
 - Means by which data will be analyzed or interpreted;
 - Discussion of relevant variables and of model specification issues (for proposed projects that plan to use multivariate analysis);
 - Possible application of results;
 - Pitfalls that may be encountered;
 - Limitations to proposed procedures; and
 - A tentative schedule or workplan for conducting major steps of study.

In describing the research plan, the applicant must explain fully any materials, procedures, situations, or activities that may be hazardous to personnel (whether or not they are directly related to a particular phase of the proposed project), along with an outline of precautions to be taken to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards.

Note: The sections detailed below are not included in the page limitations for the Project Description section.

Citations to Project Description

All references cited should be complete, including titles and all co-authors, and should conform to an accepted journal format.

Collaborative Arrangements

If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or subcontractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, the applicant must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaboration. Evidence (that is, letters of intent) should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved have agreed to render this service.

When a project requests funds for multiple institutions, a lead institution must be designated. Only one proposal may be submitted for the project and only from the lead institution. Other institutions may be designated as subcontractors. Proposals with Application for Funding Cover Pages from more than one institution are not permitted and will be returned without review. Identical proposals submitted by different investigators from different institutions are also not permitted and will be returned without review.

Vitae and Publications List(s)

To assist peer reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, all personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. For the Principal Investigator and each co-investigator listed on the Application for Funding Cover Page, for all collaborators and other senior personnel who expect to work on the project in a significant fashion (for instance, expectation of co-authorships on ensuing publications) whether or not funds are sought for their support, and for all subcontractors, the following should be included:

- *Curriculum Vitae (CV)*. The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, such as educational, employment, and professional history, honors, and awards. The vitae shall be no more than two pages each in length, excluding publications listings; and
- *Publications List(s)*. A chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past 5 years, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Also list only those non-refereed technical publications relevant to the proposed project. All authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete references as these usually appear in journals.

Budget (Form ARS-455)

A summary budget is required detailing requested support for the overall project period, which is not to exceed 3 years. Funding levels accepted are between \$100,000 and \$400,000, inclusive of indirect cost where applicable, for the duration of the project (not to



exceed 3 years). ERS will also consider supporting up to three research projects in the range of \$100,000 to \$150,000 for the development of expertise by newly graduated researchers or by senior researchers who are new to food assistance and nutrition issues.

Funds may be requested under any of the budget categories listed, provided that the item or service requested is identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute or regulation.

Budget items include:

- Salaries and wages
- Nonexpendable equipment
- Materials and supplies
- Domestic travel
- Publication costs/page charges
- Computer costs
- Other direct costs
- Indirect costs
- Cost sharing (ignore this category, may be requested later for cooperative agreements)

Salaries of faculty members and other personnel who will be working on the project may be requested in proportion to the effort they will devote to the project.

See page 12 to obtain a paper copy or an electronic copy.

Indirect Cost Rate Schedule

For reimbursement of indirect costs, the applicant must include with the application a copy of its indirect cost rate schedule that reports the applicant's federally negotiated audited rate.

Current and Pending Support

The information in this section of the proposal provides reviewers with an opportunity to evaluate the contribution the proposed work will make to the investigators' overall research program.

The proposal must list any other current public or private research support (including in-house support) to the Principal Investigator or co-investigators listed on the Application for Funding Cover Page, whether or not salary support for the person(s) involved is included in the budget. FANRP must be informed of changes in pending grant support that arise after the proposal has been submitted. Nonflexible funds—including Principal Investigator and support staff salaries, office space, and other indirect costs—may be excluded when these funds are received through a noncompetitive process. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals, including this proposal, that are now being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs or agencies. Note that this proposal must be listed as Pending. In addition to completing the information, Investigators also should include a brief statement of research objectives or project summaries for all projects listed in Current and Pending Support. Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to other possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation by the Program Manager or experts engaged by the Program Manager for this purpose. However, a proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by FANRP will not be funded under this program.

Please include the following information under the heading “Current and Pending Support.”

- Record information for active and pending projects in separate sections by name, supporting agency, total funding amount, effective and expiration dates, percentage of time committed, and title of project.
- All current research to which the Principal Investigator, co-investigators, and other senior personnel have committed a portion of their time must be listed, whether or not salary for the person involved is included in the budgets of the various projects.

Additions to Project Description

Each project description is expected to be complete without the need to refer to additional materials. However, additions to the Project Description (appendices) are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed research. These may include reprints (papers that have been published in peer-reviewed journals) or preprints (manuscripts in press for a peer-reviewed journal must be accompanied by letter of acceptance from the publishing journal).

Manuscripts sent in support of the proposal should be single-spaced and printed on both sides of the page. Each manuscript must be identified with the name of the submitting organization, the name of the Principal Investigator, and the title of the proposal, and be securely attached to each copy of the proposal. Staff of FANRP will not collate applicant proposals or proposal addenda.

Information may not be appended to a proposal to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the project description. Extraneous materials will not be used during the review process.

What/Where To Submit

An original and 12 copies of the application are required. Due to the volume of proposals that are expected and the difficulty in identifying proposals submitted in several packages, all copies of each proposal must be mailed in a single package. In addition, please ensure that each copy of the proposal is stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the proposal contains all pertinent information when originally submitted. Prior to mailing, it is urged that the proposal be compared with the checklist on the inside front cover of this announcement.

To ensure prompt receipt of submitted proposals, use First Class or Express mail, or a courier service. To be considered for funding this fiscal year, proposals (an original and 12 copies) must be transmitted by May 17, 2002 (as indicated by postmark or date on courier bill of lading). Late proposals will not be considered. Electronic or fax submissions will not be accepted.

Address for Submitting Proposals:

Economic Research Service, USDA
FANRP Business Office
1800 M Street, NW, Room N2129
Washington, DC 20036-5831



Proposal Disposition

FANRP will select those proposals that will be offered an award based upon peer review, research priorities, and the availability of funding.

FANRP reserves the right to negotiate with the Principal Investigator or project director and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (for example, reductions in the scope of work), funding level, or period or method of support prior to recommending any project for funding.

A proposal may be withdrawn by the Principal Investigator at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the proposal; however, withdrawn proposals normally will not be returned. One copy of each proposal that is not selected for funding (including those that are withdrawn) will be retained by FANRP for a period of one (1) year. The remaining copies will be destroyed.

Duration of Awards

The total period for which a grant or cooperative agreement is awarded may not exceed 3 years.

Management Information

Once a grant or cooperative agreement has been reviewed and recommended for funding, specific management and organizational information relating to the applicant shall be requested on a one-time basis prior to the award. Copies of forms needed in fulfilling the requirements will be provided by the FANRP office.

Notice of Award

A competitive grant or cooperative agreement award document, containing the budget, terms and conditions of the award, and other necessary information, will be prepared and forwarded to each grantee or cooperator, along with a Notice of Competitive Grant or Cooperative Agreement Award, by the Administrative and Financial Management Division, ARS, USDA.

Financial Obligations

For any competitive grant or cooperative agreement awarded, the maximum financial obligation of ERS shall be the amount of funds authorized for the award. This amount will be stated on the award instrument and on the approved budget. However, in the event an erroneous amount is stated on the grant award instrument, the approved budget, or any supporting document, ERS reserves the unilateral right to make the correction and to make an appropriate adjustment in the amount of the award to align with the authorized amount.

Nothing in these guidelines or any program announcement shall obligate ERS, the Department, or the United States to take favorable action on any application received in response to any announcement, or to support any project at a particular level. Further, neither the approval of any application nor the award of any project grant or cooperative agreement shall commit or obligate the United States in any way to make any renewal, supplemental, continuation, or other award with respect to any approved application or portion of an approved application.



Post-Award Administration

Awardees will be required to ensure that all funds are expended in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant or cooperative agreement award, Departmental regulations, and the applicable Federal cost principles in effect on the date of the award. Responsibility for the use and expenditure of grant or cooperative agreement funds may not be transferred or delegated in whole or in part to another party (even if a grantee or cooperator enters into a contractual relationship with that party), unless the grant or cooperative agreement itself is transferred in whole or in part to another party by ERS.

Authorization to make changes in approved project plans, budget, period of support, etc., will be governed largely by the terms and conditions of the competitive grant award or cooperative agreement. Among other things, these terms and conditions will set forth the kinds of post-award changes that may be made by the awardee and the kinds of changes that are reserved to the FANRP Office. It is urged that all key project personnel and authorized organizational representatives read them carefully.

Release of Information

ERS receives grant and cooperative agreement proposals in confidence and will protect the confidentiality of their contents to the extent permitted by law. When a proposal results in a grant or cooperative agreement, however, it becomes part of the public record and is available to the public upon written request. Copies of proposals (including excerpts from proposals) that are not funded will not be released. Information regarding funded projects will be made available to the extent permitted under the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, and implementing USDA regulations.

Requests to obtain authorized information (and fee schedule relating to the handling of this information) or to obtain information regarding procedures related to release of grantor cooperative agreement information should be directed to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Coordinator, ARS Information Staff, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Bldg. 1, Rm. 2248, Mail Stop 5128, Beltsville, MD 20705-5128; telephone (301) 504-1640.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.