U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant Program**

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

CFDA#: <u>10.598</u>

DATES:

RFA Release Date: June 26, 2014

Letter of Intent Date: July 18, 2014

Application Submission Date: 11:59 EDT August 15, 2014

Award Date: September 26, 2014

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Section 29(a) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2036) authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to provide grants on a competitive basis to State agencies to strengthen recipient integrity activities in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).[1] Up to $7 million has been appropriated in FY 2014 for State agencies to prevent recipient trafficking of SNAP benefits. FNS anticipates providing additional funding in future fiscal years to further this effort; these funds will be awarded from a separate RFA. The purpose of the SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant Program is to provide grants to State agencies to implement process improvements designed to detect, investigate, and prosecute individuals suspected of trafficking SNAP benefits. SNAP recipient trafficking refers to the unlawful exchange of SNAP benefits for cash payment. The trafficking of SNAP benefits is an egregious violation of program rules and can result in severe penalties, such as criminal punishment and permanent disqualification from the program.

II.   BACKGROUND

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance programs. It began in its modern form in 1961 but has its origins in the Food Stamp Plan to help the needy in the 1930's. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net and provides nutrition assistance benefits via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to millions of low income people. These benefits help supplement household food budgets so recipients can purchase more healthy food.

FNS works in partnership with States in the administration of SNAP. While the vast majority of recipients are eligible and use their benefits as intended, there are some who violate program rules. Program violations may include a number of activities, such as falsifying income or identity in order to be eligible for benefits they may not be entitled to, or by using benefits for anything other than their intended purpose. Exchanging SNAP benefits for cash, commonly referred to as trafficking, is the most egregious program violation. SNAP has zero tolerance for fraud and continues to work with its State partners to implement aggressive measures to improve program integrity.

III.   ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This grant opportunity is open to the 53 State agencies that administer SNAP. FNS will consider only one application per State agency. There is no State matching requirement for this grant program.

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[1] Throughout this RFA, "State agencies" refers to the agencies that administer SNAP which are the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.

IV.   PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A total of up to $7 million in Federal funding will be made available for the SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant Program, contingent upon availability of funds. FNS anticipates awarding the grants through a competitive process by September 26, 2014. Grantees may use grant funds for the duration of the project period. The period of performance begins on September 30, 2014, and is not to exceed two (2) years from the start date, or September 30, 2016. FNS intends to fund multiple grants under this RFA in order to maximize the benefit to State agencies. The number of grants awarded will be dependent on the quality and nature of the grants received.

The goal of the SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant Program is to improve outcomes for State agency activities devoted to recipient trafficking prevention, detection, and prosecution. Funds from this RFA are for new projects and shall not be used for the ongoing cost of carrying out an existing project. The SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant Program is targeting the following specific areas for consideration of grant funding:

1) Transition of any State that currently utilizes batch processing to upload and verify information with FNS's electronic Disqualified Recipient System (eDRS) to using web services; resulting in more secure, timely, and accurate information.
2) Process improvements intended to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of State recipient fraud oversight operations, with a particular emphasis on the detection, investigation, and prosecution of trafficking.
3) Pilot innovative strategies to increase the number of SNAP recipient trafficking allegations that are investigated and administratively disqualified or prosecuted.
4) Pilot innovative strategies to identify and successfully investigate attempts to buy or sell SNAP benefits online using any form of social media (Facebook, Twitter) or ecommerce website (Craigslist, eBay).

FNS does not intend for this grant program to fund compliance with existing statutory or regulatory program requirements, such as data matching. FNS will continue to fund all State agency activities through 50% Federal matching of administrative costs. Furthermore, the SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant program is not intended to fund new systems or improvements to systems, such as fraud detection or eligibility systems, improvements to data management and warehousing, or other large scale system or technology-based projects. FNS anticipates issuing a future RFA that is focused exclusively on fraud detection systems, the use of data analytics, and data management/warehousing. FNS has determined that a separate RFA is required to account for the complexity, scope, and timeframe necessary to properly evaluate and administer a grant to strengthen the use of predictive analytics to prevent SNAP recipient trafficking. In addition, FNS anticipates issuing future RFAs to target integrity improvements and best practices in other areas currently being evaluated by SNAP; including, but not limited to: data integrity practices, client education, fraud training, and State agency reporting.

Proposals should clearly describe the intent and scope of activities and how they will contribute to improvement of State agency processes associated with the prevention of SNAP recipient trafficking. Each project design should include quantifiable objectives, measures to assess

progress toward meeting those objectives, project activities linked to meeting specific objectives, and a list of deliverables and/or milestones for the duration of the project. A clear and reasonable timeline should also be included.

Every grantee must assess and report on its progress each quarter by using performance measures tied to specific project objectives. These measures can include process measures, output measures, and outcome measures. The proposal should describe the process for collecting and reporting these data including the data source.

Applicants should provide a narrative description of how the project will be staffed and managed, including a project organizational chart.

The proposal's project description must capture a bona fide need. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposed project description. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed.

We encourage potential applicants to carefully read the review criteria listed in this RFA (Section V.). These criteria outline the qualities FNS expects successful proposals to have; they will also guide the reviewers' evaluation of proposals.

FNS reminds applicants that the submission of a proposal does not guarantee funding. Funding for approved grants will be provided through the Grant Award/Letter of Credit process, in the same manner as other funds, upon receipt of a properly executed Grant Agreement and subject to the availability of funding. All SNAP Recipient Trafficking Prevention Grant funds must be obligated and all activities under the Grant must be completed by September 30, 2016.

V.   EVALUATION OF GRANT APPLICATION CRITERIA

The RFA should clearly describe the review and selection process. All criteria should include the evaluation score factors for each criterion. The RFA must list any program policy, merit criteria, program specific requirements, cost sharing or other factors that a selecting official may use when selecting applications for an award.

FNS grant office staff will pre-screen all applications to ensure that they contain the required documents and information. If an application does not include all appropriate information, FNS will consider the application to be non-responsive and will eliminate it from further evaluation.

Following the initial screening process, FNS will assemble a peer panel group to review and determine the technical merits of each application. The peer panel will evaluate proposals based on how well they address the required application components. The peer panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on the evaluation scoring.

The selecting official may accept the recommendations of the peer review panel. However, FNS reserves the right to fund out of rank order to achieve agency priorities (such as to grant an award

to an entity that includes a joint effort between a State agency and a community-based or faith-based organization, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, etc.). This grant solicitation is contingent upon the availability of funds. FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in future fiscal years should additional funds be made available.

Evaluation Factors and Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA.

1. Soundness or Merit of Project Design   (40 points)

Problem analysis: The proposal clearly describes the problem to be solved and provides evidence that the proposed approach is well-suited to solve the identified issue.

Impact: The proposal clearly demonstrates:
- A direct effect on the SNAP State agency process and provides evidence that the changes would improve SNAP recipient trafficking prevention activities.
- A clear progression from idea to practice in a State agency.
- A clear description of the impact the project is expected to make. Impact can be described in terms of the degree to which the new or improved processes are expected to enhance the State agency's ability to prevent, detect, and prosecute recipient trafficking cases.

Quality: The proposal shows thought, analysis, clarity, and the use of relevant facts and knowledge.

Sustainability: The proposal shows that the project has the potential to be sustained after the grant period ends.

Innovation: The application proposes innovative development of new or revised State agency processes.

Feasibility: The application proposes projects that are capable of being accomplished and likely to be implemented.

2. Implementation and Evaluation   (20 points)

Timeline: The proposal includes a project timeline that outlines proposed tasks and demonstrates that sufficient time is allotted for each activity.

Evaluation: The proposal describes a well-thought-out, organized review and evaluation process that will measure whether the goals of the project have been met. The evaluation should focus on measuring the impact the project seeks to make. Please be sure to include information on who will measure the goals of the project, how the goals will be measured, when the goals will be measured and what the organization will be measuring.

3. Budget Appropriateness and Economic Efficiency (25 points)

Budget: The proposal includes:
- A line item budget, See Attachment C - Application Package Checklist to assure each category is addressed in the budget.
- A narrative that demonstrates how funds will be spent, by whom and for what purpose
- The narrative should provide enough detail for reviewers to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the goals and objectives of the project. There should be adequate justification for budget costs based on current industry costs/standards. Information on costs should be obtained from applicable organizations or from online sources.
- Additionally, a copy of the approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be attached if indirect costs are shown as a budget expense to the project.
- If applicable, the budget must show how the costs are allocated among the benefiting programs and demonstrate that this grant is only going to fund SNAP's share.

Efficiency: The proposal is cost effective – it demonstrates that the anticipated results are commensurate with the cost of the project.

Contractual and Consultant Costs: Proposals who wish to hire a consultant or contract work out must provide the following information:

- Consultant's name and description of service
- Itemized list of all direct costs and fees
- Salaries must have the number of personnel including the position title
- Specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the salary
- Number of estimated hours times hourly wage
- All expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project
- Applicants that are required to issue a bid should provide a narrative explaining the requirement and provide a reasonable estimate of Contractual and Consultant Costs.

NOTE: Proposal submissions which omit the required budget forms, budget narratives and/or line item descriptions will not receive the full point value for this criterion. Therefore, applicants should recognize that a well-written budget narrative which justifies the proposed project expenditures assists the reviewers during the review process.

4. Staff Capability and Management (15 points)

Oversight: The proposal demonstrates that effective and consistent oversight by qualified project managers will be implemented throughout the project.

Communication: The proposal demonstrates that effective communication will exist within the organization. The proposal includes an organizational chart of the proposed project.

Staff: The proposal identifies the project director or manager and other key staff. The proposal includes resumes that demonstrate that the proposed staff has the appropriate technical and experiential backgrounds for their proposed roles. If the applicant is unable to identify the project director or manager and key staff, it must include with the application package job descriptions for positions that must be assigned. Applicants should address their contingency or back-up plans in the event of key staff departures.

Time Commitment: The proposal outlines the amount of time and effort the project director or manager, key staff, and, if applicable, partnering organizations, will contribute to the project.

Selection of Grant Applications

After the panel evaluates and scores the grant applications, FNS will rank them by score, starting with the highest score, and make recommendations to the selecting official. The selecting official will consider the panel recommendations. In general, awards will be based on rank funding order. However, FNS reserves the right to fund out of rank order to achieve agency priorities (such as to grant an award to an entity that includes a joint effort between a State agency and a community-based or faith-based organization, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, etc.). If the panel review indicates that FNS has received few or no technically acceptable proposals, the selecting official may determine that FNS will make no awards or commit less than the $7 million set aside for this purpose.

As mentioned above, FNS is interested in funding projects that address priorities specified on page 4 of this RFA. However, FNS reserves the right to award grants to several such entities, or not to award any grants to such entities if it does not receive acceptable applications.

Determination of Award Amounts

If an application has been selected for funding and the budget submission is realistic and well-supported, the application will be funded at the level requested. However, FNS reserves the right to fund applications at a lesser amount if it judges that the application can be implemented with less, or if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards.

Award Notification and Issuance of Funds

FNS will notify selected State agencies or organizations in writing in no later than September 26, 2014. Funds will be made available upon receipt of a signed grant award document, FNS-529.

VI. APPLICATION FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must adhere to the following application format. Use of this format will make it easier for grant reviewers to locate the requested information and to evaluate your application.

The proposed project plan should be typed on 8 ½" X 11" white paper with at least 1 inch margins on the top and bottom. All pages should be single-spaced, in 12 point font. The project description with relevant information should be captured on no more than 20 pages, not including the cover sheet, table of contents, resumes, budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms. All pages must be numbered. Proposals should be submitted to FNS in Microsoft Word or PDF format.

Special Instructions:

- Late application submission will not be considered in this competition. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received.
- Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, or certification will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted via the Grants.gov portal will not be considered.
- FNS reserves the right to use this solicitation and competition to award additional grants in the next fiscal year should additional funds be made available through future appropriations.
- Grant awards are subject to the availability of funds.

1. Cover Sheet
The cover page should include, at a minimum:

- Applicant's name and mailing address
- Primary contact's name, job title, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address
- Grant program title and subprogram title (if applicable)

2. Table of Contents
Include relevant topic page number

3. Application Project Summary
The application should clearly describe the proposed project activities and anticipated outcomes that would result if the proposal is funded.

4. Project Narrative
The project narrative should clearly identify what the applicant is proposing and how it will address a solution, the expected results and/or benefits once the solution is achieved, and how it will meet the RFA program scope and objectives. The proposed project methodology should describe the project design, address program specific methodology needs, procedures, timetables, monitoring/oversight, and the organization's project staffing.

5. <u>Application Budget Narrative</u>

The budget narrative should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. The narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct cost. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement.

6. <u>Required Grant Application Forms</u>
   - SF-424 Application and Instruction for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
   - SF-424A Budget Information and Instruction (SF-424A)
   - SF-424B Assurance-Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
   - SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities): Indicate on the form whether your organization intends to conduct lobbying activities. If your organization does not intend to lobby, write "Not Applicable."

In addition, the applicant must submit the following Departmental Forms:

   - AD-1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension
   - AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions
   - AD-1049 Certificate Regarding Drug Free Workplace Requirements Alternative 1 (Note that there is a version of this form for Individuals: AD-1050 and a version for State Agencies: AD-1052)

These forms are at the USDA Forms site: http://www.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/forms-management/approved-computer-generated-forms.

Debriefing Requests

Non-selected applicants may request a debriefing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of submitted proposals. This information may be useful when preparing future grant proposals. Additional information on debriefing requests will be forwarded to non-selected applicants.

VII.   APPLICATION ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

LETTER OF INTENT

The eligible applicant that intends to submit an application should submit a Letter of Intent notice by **July 18, 2014**. This notice does not obligate the applicant to submit an application but provides FNS with useful information in preparing for the review and selection process. The notice should include the potential applicant's name and address, organization's name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the primary point of contact. The applicant can send the letter via the mail or e-mail to the FNS Grants Officer identified below:

Dawn Addison, Grants Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS

3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail: dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov

APPLICATION DUE DATE
The complete application must be uploaded to **www.grants.gov** by 11:59 PM, Eastern
Daylight Time, August 15, 2014. Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed
ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. FNS will not consider any additions or
revisions to an application once it is received. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-
delivered applications.

Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications to **www.grants.gov** should contact
the grants officer listing above for further instructions.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION
Applications MUST be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov.
In order to submit an application via **grants.gov**, applicants must have obtained a Data Universal
Numbering System (DUNS) number and registered in both the new Systems for Award
Management (SAM) and on grants.gov. The applicant is strongly advised to allow ample time to
initiate the grants.gov application submission process. All applicants must have current Central
Contractor Registry (CCR) status at the time of application submission and throughout the
duration of a federal award in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25. Please visit the following websites
to obtain additional information on how to obtain a DUNS number (**www.dnb.com**) and register
in SAM (**https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/**).

What is SAM? The System for Award Management (SAM) is combining federal procurement
systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) into one new system. This
consolidation is being done in phases. The first phase of SAM incorporated the functionality
from several systems, including CCR.

For additional information regarding SAM see the following link:
**https://www.acquisition.gov/SAM_Guides/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registr
ations%20v1.pdf**

Below is additional information that should assist the applicant through this process:
DUNS Number: In order to obtain or confirm a DUNS number, contact Dun and Bradstreet via
the internet at **http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform** or by calling 1-888-814-1435, Monday thru
Friday, 8am-9pm EST. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number. It may take
several days to obtain a DUNS number.

SAM Registration: For applicant organizations that were previously registered in the CCR,
relevant applicant information is already in SAM; set up a SAM account as necessary to update
any information. To register in SAM, the applicant's DUNS number, Tax ID Number (TIN), and
taxpayer name (as it appears on the applicant's last tax return) are all required. Registration

should take 3-5 days. **Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete should contact SAM at https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list.**

Grants.gov Registration: In order to apply for a grant, applicants must have completed the above registrations and registered on grants.gov. The grants.gov registration process can be accessed at **www.grants.govapplicants/get_registered.jsp**. Generally, the registration process takes between 3-5 business days.

If you are a new grants.gov user, please ensure that your organization's Point of Contact (POC) has designated you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). If you are not designated as an AOR, you will be unable to submit your application into grants.gov.

Applicants should allow ample time to complete the necessary steps on grants.gov.

Special Instructions/Notices:
In review, in order to make an electronic submission, applicants must:
1. Obtain a DUNS number
   a. **http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform** or 1-888-814-1435
   b. There is no fee associated with obtaining a DUNS number.
   c. It may take several days to obtain a DUNS number.
2. Register in SAM
   a. **https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/**
   b. Must have organization's DUNS, entity's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on last tax return).
3. Register in grants.gov
   a. **www.grants.govapplicants/get_registered.jsp**
   b. Generally, the registration process takes between 3-5 business days.
   c. Must have DUNS and be registered in SAM.

Please be aware that the grants.gov system provides several confirmation notices; you need to be sure that you have confirmation that the application was accepted.

QUESTIONS
Please direct all questions regarding this solicitation to Dawn Addison, Grants Officer, via e-mail at dawn.addison@fns.usda.gov.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE NOTICES AND REQUIREMENTS

CONFIDENTIALITY OF AN APPLICATION

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of FNS transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted

by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be not released to the public. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The agency requires all panel reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. Names of applicants, including States and tribal governments, submitting an application will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

AWARD NOTICE

Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions; any contact from a FNS grants or program officer should not be considered as a notice of a grant award.   No pre-award or pre-agreement costs incurred prior to the effective start date are allowed unless approved and stated on FNS' signed award document.

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. Only the recognized FNS authorized signature can bind the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to the expenditure of funds related to an award's approved budget.

In the first month after award, project staff will meet with the Project Officer by conference call to review work plan, discuss deliverables and deliverable schedule, and additional aspects of the project. Submit OMB memo and attachments to FNS. Any testing will be described in detail and the grantee will be responsible for developing an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Generic Clearance Approval Request for Formative Research, and obtaining OMB Approval for an Information Collection

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Generic Clearance Approval Request for Formative Research, Obtaining OMB Approval for an Information Collection
The grantee shall submit to FNS a memorandum requesting OMB approval for formative research under a currently approved generic OMB clearance package. The format will be provided by FNS. The grantee should be aware that the OMB generic clearance approval request may require revisions after each level of review. The grantee shall be required to update the OMB package after each set of required revisions and edits. The OMB generic clearance approval request shall contain copies of all recruiting materials and data collection instruments. Special note shall be taken that scripts are required to be prepared and included in the OMB package for all communications (either by telephone, mail, email, or internet) with all persons and organizations contacted in connection with the project. If required, versions of the data collection instruments translated into other languages, such as Spanish, must be included in the

OMB package. The OMB package should be submitted in MS Word format. The package shall not be accepted by FNS until OMB gives final clearance of the package.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425, Financial Status Report data into the FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis. In order to access FPRS, the grant recipient must obtain USDA e-Authentication certification and access to FPRS. More detailed instructions for reporting will be included in the FNS Federal financial assistance award package.

Required Recordkeeping – The Grantee selected in connection with this Request for Applications will be required to submit and maintain quarterly Progress and Financial Status Reports (SF-425). All final reports are due 90 days after the expiration date of the cooperative agreement. FNS will provide additional details at the time of award. The selected agencies or organizations must operate a financial management system that provides accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial status of the project.

PROGRESS REPORTING

The recipient will be responsible for managing and monitoring the progress of the grant project activities and performance. The award document will indicate the reporting schedule for submitting project performance/progress reports to FNS. Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the award terms and conditions.

Quarterly Reports - Quarterly progress reports must be submitted to FNS. These progress reports must provide a description of the activities conducted during the reporting period, major accomplishments with completion dates and budget information, deviations from the proposed plan, difficulties encountered, solutions developed to overcome difficulties, and major planned activities for the next quarter. These reports are due 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. More detailed specifications for the quarterly progress report content and submission will be included in the agreement.

Final Report – A report of up to 25 pages must be submitted within 90 days of the expiration of the grant period. This report will be composed of a short Executive Summary and the following:

▪ A project description including a concise summary of the major accomplishments, the difficulties encountered, and the solutions developed to resolve the difficulties; and
▪ A discussion of the project results and lessons learned.

Copies of any deliverables, media or publicity releases/articles and links to materials on websites also should be included or papers resulting from the grant should be attached to the final report. All products should include an acknowledgement of the source of funding. The Federal awarding agency reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use, for Federal Government purposes, the copyright in

any work developed under a grant, sub-grant, or contract under a grant or sub-grant or any rights of copyright to which a grantee, sub-grantee, or a contractor purchases ownership with grant support.

Applicants chosen for award will also be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules found at 7 CFR sec. 3017.300 by doing any **one** of the following:

- Checking the System for Award Management (SAM) found at www.sam.gov;
- Collecting a certification that the entity is neither excluded nor disqualified. Since a Federal certification form is no longer available, the grantee or sub-grantee electing this method must devise its own;
- Including a clause to this effect in the sub-grant agreement and in any procurement contract expected to equal or exceed $25,000, awarded by the grantee or a sub-grantee under its grant or sub-grant;
- Sub-grantee and contractors must obtain a DUNS Number. All Federal Government awards are required to have a DUNS number. To obtain a DUNS number, contact Dun and Bradstreet at 1-866-705-5711 or visit their website at https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions.asp. There is no charge for a DUNS number. The DUNS number serves as a means of tracking and identifying applications for Federal assistance and is required on all applications for Federal assistance.

Note: FNS may request additional information from the grantee or require the grantee to complete additional forms at any time during the grant solicitation process.

IX.   ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

Debarment and Suspension 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417

A recipient chosen for an award shall comply with the non-procurement debarment and suspension common rule implementing Executive Orders (E.O.) 12549 and 12669, "Debarment and Suspension," codified at 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417. This common rule restricts sub-awards and contracts with certain parties that are debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs or activities. The approved grant recipient will be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules prior to approving a sub-grant award by checking the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) found at www.epls.gov.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Effective October 1, 2010, all grant applicants must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number as a universal identifier for Federal financial assistance. Active grant recipients and their direct sub-recipients of a sub-grant award also must obtain a DUNS number. To request a DUNS number visit: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.

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

FNS may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with the requirements described in 2 CFR 25 to provide a valid DUNS number and maintain an active CCR registration with current information.

Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information 2 CFR Part 170

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006 (Public Law 109–282), as amended by Section 6202 of Public Law 110–252 requires primary grantees of Federal grants and cooperative agreements to report information on sub-grantee obligations and executive compensation. FFATA promotes open government by enhancing the Federal Government's accountability for its stewardship of public resources. This is accomplished by making Government information, particularly information on Federal spending, accessible to the general public.

Primary grantees, including State agencies, are required to report actions taken on or after October 1, 2010, that obligates $25,000 or more in Federal grant funds to first- tier sub-grantees. This information must be reported in the Government-wide FFATA Sub-Award Reporting System (FSRS). In order to access FSRS a current CCR registration is required. A primary grantee and first-tier sub-grantees must also report total compensation for each of its five most-highly compensated executives. Every primary and first-tier grantee must obtain a DUNS number prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to grant recipients upon award.

Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417

Section 872 of this Act requires the development and maintenance of a Federal Government information system that contains specific information on the integrity and performance of covered Federal agency contractors and grantees. The Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) was developed to address these requirements. FAPIIS contains integrity and performance information from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, information from the CCR database, and suspension and debarment information from the EPLS. FNS will review and consider any information about the applicant reflected in FAPIIS when making a judgment about whether an applicant is qualified to receive an award.

X.   CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

This grant will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations and the corresponding OMB Circulars that establish the principles for cost determination found at 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle A, Chapter II: Part 220, Education Institutions (OMB Circular A-21); Part 225, State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87); and Part 230, Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122). Any Federal laws, regulations, or USDA directives released after this RFA is posted will be implemented as instructed.

Government-wide Regulations
- 2 CFR Part 25: "Universal Identifier and Central Locator Contractor Registration"
- 2 CFR Part 170: "Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information"
- 2 CFR Part 175: "Award Term for Trafficking in Persons"
- 2 CFR Part 180: "OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)"
- 2 CFR Part 417: "Office of the Chief Financial Officer: Department of Agriculture Implementation of OMB Guidance on Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension"
- 41 U.S.C. Section 22 "Interest of Member of Congress"

USDA Regulations
- 7 CFR Part 15: "Nondiscrimination"
- 7 CFR Part 3015: "Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations"
- 7 CFR Part 3016: "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments"
- 7 CFR Part 3018: "New Restrictions on Lobbying"
- 7 CFR Part 3019: "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations"
- 7 CFR Part 3021: "Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)"
- 7 CFR Part 3052: "Audits of State, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations"

XI.   RFA APPLICATION CHECKLIST

All proposals submitted under this RFA must contain the applicable elements as described in this announcement. The application must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov, by midnight on [add the deadline date]. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the proposal is complete and in the proper order prior to submission.

- ✓ Read the RFA carefully, usually more than once.
- ✓ Have you obtained a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registered the number in the System for Award Management (SAM)?
- ✓ Have you verified that your Central Contractor Registration is active?
- ✓ Have you registered your entity in grants.gov and are you authorized as a user in grants.gov to submit on behalf of your agency?
- ✓ Have you prepared and submitted the appropriate forms as shown under the Required Standard Application Forms section of this RFA?
- ✓ Have you included the RFA CFDA # [enter the number] on your application?
- ✓ Have you included your contact information: telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address?
- ✓ Have you addressed, met, and considered any program specific requirements or restrictions?
- ✓ Is the project's proposal clearly stated?
  - o Does it comply with any format requirements?
  - o Does it comply with the page limitation?
  - o Most importantly does it directly relate to the RFA's objectives and priorities?
  - o Don't assume that reviewers know anything about your organization and its work.
- ✓ Have one or more persons read your proposal who did not participate in its writing and ensure that it was it clear to them?
- ✓ Does the proposed project and budget meet the bona fide needs of the RFA?
- ✓ Is the budget summary included?
  - o Does it agree with the calculations shown on the OMB budget form?
  - o Is the budget in line with the project description?
- ✓ Be sure to submit a timely application into www.Grants.gov in order to meet the RFA application deadline.
- ✓ FNS reserves the right to request additional information not clearly addressed in the initial application.

XII.   RFA BUDGET NARRATIVE CHECKLIST

This checklist will assist you in completing the budget narrative portion of the application. Please review the checklist to ensure the items below are addressed in the budget narrative.   FOR GRANT APPLICANT USE ONLY. DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM WITH THE APPLICATION

NOTE: The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposal project description (statement of work) bona fine need. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed.

	YES	NO
Personnel		
Did you include all key employees paid for by this grant under this heading?		
Are employees of the applicant's organization identified by name and position title?		
Did you reflect percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTE)?		
Fringe Benefits		
Did you include your organization's fringe benefit amount along with the basis for the computation?		
Did you list the type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds?		
Travel		
Are travel expenses itemized? For example origination/destination points, number and purpose of trips, number of staff traveling, mode of transportation and cost of each trip.		
Are the Attendee Objectives and travel justifications included in the narrative?		
Is the basis for the lodging estimates identified in the budget? For example include excerpt from travel regulations.		
Equipment		

Is the need for the equipment justified in the narrative?		
Are the types of equipment, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased listed in the budget?		
Is the basis for the cost per item or other basis of computation stated in the budget?		
Supplies		
Are the types of supplies, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased reflected in the budget?		
Is the basis for the costs per item or other basis of computation stated?		
Contractual: (FNS reserves the right to request information on all contractual awards and associated costs after the contract is awarded.)		
Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost for a contract or sub-grant expense(s) shown on the budget?		
A justification for all Sole-source contracts must be provided in the budget narrative prior to approving this identified cost.		
Other		
Consultant Services. – Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost shown on the budget. The following information must be provided in the justification: description of service, the consultant's name and an itemized list of all direct cost and fees, number of personnel including the position title (specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the costs), Number of estimated hours X hourly wages, and all expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project.		
For all other line items listed under the "Other" heading. - List all items to be covered under this heading along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.		

Indirect Costs		
Has the applicant obtained a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from an Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most resent and signed negotiated rate agreement must be provided along with the application.		
If no negotiated agreement exists, the basis and the details of the indirect costs to be requested should also be reflected in the budget.		

Tips for Proposal Writers

The Soundness or Merit of Project Design section of the application is your opportunity to convince reviewers that your project meets the selection criteria. Below are some general recommendations to help you present your project in a way the reviewers will find compelling and persuasive.

- Read the RFA carefully and more than once.
- State clearly in your cover letter if your application addresses the FY 2014 priorities.
- Use the five review criteria to structure your proposal correctly.
- Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order they are presented in the instructions. Use headings to differentiate narrative sections by criterion.
- Be clear and succinct. Reviewers are not interested in jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. They are interested in learning precisely what you intend to do, and how your project responds to the selection criteria.
- Don't leave out mandatory forms such as resumes, budgets, certifications, or letters of commitment/endorsement.
- Make sure budget figures are consistent across displays and narratives.
- Avoid circular reasoning. The problem you describe should not be defined as the lack of the solution you are proposing.
- Explain how. Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
- Don't make assumptions. Do not assume your reviewers know anything about your organization, your proposed program, or your partners. Avoid overuse of acronyms.
- Use an impartial proofreader. Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the proposal.