

## ATTACHMENT 2

### ESTABLISH THE USDA CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION INNOVATIONS

#### BACKGROUND

The WIC Program serves low-income nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to their fifth birthday. The purpose of WIC is to provide supplemental foods and nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, as an adjunct to good health care, during critical times of growth and development, to prevent the occurrence of health problems, including drug abuse, and improve health status.

The WIC Program reaches an average of over 9 million women, infants and children each month, including the caregivers of one-half of all infants and one quarter of all preschoolers in the U.S., as well as one-third of all expectant mothers. Half of WIC participants are children 1 to 4 years of age, and most of these children have participated in WIC since their prenatal period.

WIC provides nutrition education to all participants as part of their benefits. The nutrition focus of the program in general, combined with the substantial investment in providing direct nutrition education is reflected in the fact that almost 90 percent of the public health nutritionists in the U.S. worked within WIC in 2006-2007.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the ongoing developments in WIC nutrition education supported by the annual WIC Nutrition Services and Administration grants to each of the 90 State WIC Agencies, the Food and Nutrition Service has annually awarded special project grant fund which, by law, can only be awarded to the State WIC Agencies. Since 1999, these WIC Special Project Grants have largely focused on sustainable, cost-neutral innovations to revitalize quality nutrition services in the Program.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Food and Nutrition Service in establishing a “*USDA Center for Collaborative Research on WIC Nutrition Education Innovations*” is to enhance the effort to identify, develop, evaluate and disseminate innovative and effective WIC nutrition education interventions. This is to be accomplished by providing grant funding for a university-based center with this charge, including a program of sub-grants to support development and evaluation of WIC-focused researcher-initiated innovations from researchers across the nation.

Accordingly, FNS announces the availability of funds and a RFA to develop and support the “*USDA Center for Collaborative Research on WIC Nutrition Education Innovations*” (“Center”), which will include a university-based grant series for researcher-initiated projects to design, implement and evaluate innovative WIC-based nutrition education interventions to improve nutrition behaviors. The Center will also promote innovative and high-quality research on WIC-based nutrition education, coordinate activities among researchers, and widely disseminate findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Haughton, B & George, A, 2007: *Survey of the Public Health Nutrition Workforce:2006-07* (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/resources/SurveyofthePublicHealthNutritionWorkforce2006-07.pdf> accessed March 9, 2011)

FNS does not anticipate any expansion of WIC program costs to adopt and implement interventions to improve nutrition behaviors. Within this constraint, examples of issues that may be explored include, but are not limited to:

- Identification of effective models of nutrition education to improve short- and long-term food and nutrition behavior among WIC participants,
- More effective uses of technology and digital media to achieve desired outcomes, and
- Advances in communication and coordination among WIC staff, WIC participants, physicians and child care providers to improve target behaviors.

The Center will direct a program of sub-grants to support researcher-initiated projects that use a common approach to reporting findings to ensure transparency and facilitate a meta-analysis of all projects. The Center will work cooperatively with FNS to select sub-grantees and disseminate findings. FNS reserves the right to expand the scope of the Center from interventions addressing WIC nutrition education advances to similar efforts in other FNS programs.

We anticipate that the university awarded the cooperative agreement for this Center will:

1. Develop and administer a competitive process to solicit, evaluate, and fund nationwide sub-grants for researcher-initiated projects on the impact of WIC nutrition education.
2. Coordinate efforts among the sub-grantees.
3. Assess the findings from the sub-grantees' evaluations of WIC's impact on nutrition.
4. Produce a summary and synthesis of these and related efforts (such as a meta-analysis on the results) and widely disseminate this information.
5. Sponsor and coordinate a workshop/conference on observations and findings. The cooperative agreement application and the proposal shall provide a preliminary list of the types of people that will be invited to participate in the workshop/conference. Sub-grantees shall attend and actively participate in this workshop/conference. The Recipient shall prepare and publish a summary of this workshop/conference within 6 months of the event. Each project description in the workshop/conference summary shall include a description of the types of deliverables that will be submitted and/or published by each subgrantee.
6. Provide FNS for internal use and informational purposes with an electronic copy of all manuscripts resulting from this grant and its subgrants at the time of submission for publication and in final form when published.
7. Periodically provide FNS with recommendations for cost-neutral approaches to improving WIC nutrition education efforts, including estimates of the cost-benefit associated with these recommendations.

FNS involvement with the recipient will include:

1. Approving the final RFA for the sub-grantee competition issued by the university "recipient".
2. Providing comments on the recipient's plans to announce the competition.
3. Providing comments on a recipient-provided list of all applicants for the competitive sub-grants (including the principal investigator(s), institutional affiliation(s), and summary of the applicants proposed objectives and methods).

4. Review of a recipient-provided list of all awardees of the competition (including sub-grant title, dollar amount of the sub-grant, contact information for the principal investigators, brief narrative description, project time frame and expected products).
5. Approving the date, location, and time of the workshop/conference.
6. Review and comment on the workshop/conference agenda.
7. Review and comment on recipient-provided dissemination plans.

The recipient will verify the Excluded Parties List to determine the, <https://www.epls.gov/>, federal debarment and suspension status of applicants before awarding a sub-grant.

**Evaluation Factors and Criteria - Total Possible = 100%**

**An application that combines responses to multiple attachments will be rejected. Independent applications are required to apply on more than 1 attachment.**

The evaluation criteria and weights are detailed below:

**Research Merit** – Suggested work has relevance to USDA's WIC program and policies and is likely to advance innovations in WIC nutrition education that improve nutrition behaviors. **(25%)**

**Overall Approach** – Quality of proposed plans for conducting a competitive process to: solicit and award researcher-initiated sub-grants; to coordinate activities among researchers; widely disseminate findings; sponsor a conference; and ensure sub-grantees have good working relationships with WIC agencies. **(25%)**

**Feasibility** – Overall approach is reasonable and appropriate while demonstrating: experience and ability in the areas of nutrition behavior and education; coordination of efforts among multiple research organizations; capacity to follow-up with progress and financial reports to ensure the sub-grantees are on track; and safeguards that no sub-grantee is disbarred or suspended from federal government sponsored work. **(25%)**

**Staffing/Budget/Timeline** – The budget shall be consistent with objectives and timelines. The amount of funds allocated for staffing and activities shall be reasonable based off the procurement strategy. The competitive sub-grantees, collectively, shall receive no less than 51 percent of the total amount awarded to the Recipient. **(25%)**