U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Child Nutrition Programs

National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program

Fiscal Year 2015

Administrative Review and Training (ART) Grants

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

CFDA#: 10.579

KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: *XXX*

Application Submission Date: *XXX*

Anticipated Award Date: *XXX*

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I.   PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-265) amended Section 22 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a requirement that State agencies conduct additional administrative reviews of selected Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). It also amended Section 7 of the Child Nutrition Act to provide annual funding for States to be used for oversight and training of LEAs. Both of these requirements are focused on LEAs that have demonstrated a high level of, or a high risk for, administrative error. To assist State agencies in achieving this requirement, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has up to $4 million available in fiscal year (FY) 2015 to fund Administrative Reviews and Training (ART) Grants for oversight and training.

The ART grant funds will be available on a competitive basis only to the 57 State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), and are for the purpose of identifying, reviewing, monitoring and training LEAs that have demonstrated a high level of, or a high risk for, administrative error. FNS is offering two types of ART Grants: Planning and Implementation. States may apply for *either* a Planning grant *or* an Implementation grant, as described within this Request for Applications (RFA), but *not both* in a given RFA solicitation.

The purpose of this RFA is to solicit applications from eligible entities and describe:
- Types of grants available;
- Which entities are eligible to apply for grant funds;
- Requirements for submitting a successful application;
- How applications will be reviewed and selected; and
- Terms and conditions that grantees must adhere to.

FNS intends to work collaboratively with grant applicants and grantees throughout the application process and the life of grants awarded through this RFA. Within approximately three weeks of this RFA's publication, FNS will conduct a webinar with all State agencies and FNS Regional offices to review the RFA and address questions regarding the application process. Notification of the webinar date, time and call-in information will be communicated to State agencies via the FNS Regional offices and the FNS Child Nutrition Program's PartnerWeb at https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov.

Brief descriptions of previously awarded ART grant projects are located on the FNS School Meals Grants website at the following link: http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants. Applicants may find this site helpful in exploring possibilities for viable use of grant funding.

II.   FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

A. Purpose of Grant Funding
FNS expects to award up to $4 million in grant funding to State agencies for the purpose of decreasing administrative errors in those LEAs and schools that are experiencing, or likely to

experience, program administrative errors. For FY 2015, State agencies should focus on one or more of the following areas in developing their ART Grant applications:

- Training of LEA administrative personnel in application, certification, verification, meal counting and meal claiming procedures. Training may include web-based training sessions;
- Oversight and training activities focused on the nutritional quality of school meals;
- Modifications that may be necessary to update processes and systems to comply with revisions to the new Administrative Review process first implemented in school year 2013-2014; and
- Technology improvements which demonstrate an ability to address administrative errors and improve program integrity through the use of targeted monitoring and increased training in error-prone LEAs. States choosing this option must clearly demonstrate how the proposed technology can be used to implement State-level activities, specifically review and training activities associated with error prone LEAs. For example, proposals may include the following:
    - Development of data analysis tools to monitor application, certification (including direct certification), verification (including direct verification), meal counting and meal claiming procedures for error-prone school districts;
    - Training methods utilizing web-based technology; or
    - Other innovative State-level automated solutions to identify and reduce administrative errors in error-prone school districts.

B. ART Grant Types

The FY 2015 ART Grant award process involves two types of awards:
- ART Planning Grants for awards up to **$75,000**, with grant periods of up to **one year**; and
- ART Implementation Grants for awards up to **$1,500,000**, with grant periods of **one to three** years.

State agencies may apply for either type of grant (i.e., Planning or Implementation), but not both in a given RFA solicitation. **Only one grant application will be accepted from a State agency in response to this solicitation.** In addition to this section, see **Section IV, Application and Submission Information**, for information on the required content for a grant application submission.

FNS will award these funds using a cooperative agreement to allow FNS more active participation with the cooperator during both project development and project execution. Examples of FNS participation include activities such as the following:

- Ongoing evaluation of quarterly progress and financial reports to monitor the grantee's project activities and ensure that the objectives, terms and conditions of the agreement are met;

- Periodic on-site and off-site technical assistance to provide evaluation and guidance on project activities and outputs as they relate to child nutrition program objectives, including:
  - Providing program guidance on curriculum development;
  - Evaluation of training materials and websites;
  - Evaluation of technology improvements;
  - Review of project plans and milestones;
  - Review of procurement documents for sub-grantee involvement (i.e., requests for proposals, contracts, performance work statements, and project plans); and
  - Other technical assistance related to project objectives; and

- Periodic collaborative meetings for multiple grantees for the purposes of technical assistance, training, problem solving and sharing successful or promising practices. Meetings may be conducted as webinars, teleconferences or training workshops in the Washington, D.C. area or in another city more centrally located within the contiguous United States.

Planning Grants

Planning grants are intended for State agencies administering the NSLP and SBP that know they need to reduce program administrative errors in LEAs, but may need to conduct additional *research* to identify the most effective way to decrease errors and improve program integrity. Therefore, potential uses of Planning grant funds include, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- Feasibility studies and cost/benefit analyses to plan for automation projects;

- Conducting an internal review of the State's administrative processes;

- Detailed analysis of past Administrative Reviews to identify most frequent Program requirements found to be out of compliance or the potential for noncompliance;

- Hiring a contractor or university to conduct a study of the processes and recommend solutions;

- Consulting with stakeholders; and

- Assessing current training and oversight capabilities, needs and effective training methods.

State agencies that are awarded Planning grants from this solicitation may apply for funding for an Implementation grant at the next annual opportunity (FY 2016) in order to carry out an implementation project in follow-up to their Planning grant activities and outcomes. Planning grant funds may be used to complete the planning for the implementation project and to develop an ART Implementation Grant application based on the Planning grant project outcomes. However, State agencies awarded an ART Planning Grant in FY 2015 who then apply for an ART Implementation Grant in FY 2016 are not guaranteed to receive an FY 2016 Implementation grant award. Due to funding limitations each year, all ART Grant awards, both Planning and Implementation, are competitive awards and will be based on the evaluation criteria stated in each fiscal year's grant RFA. Consequently, FNS encourages State agencies to apply for an ART Planning Grant to conduct activities that would be beneficial in helping them reduce Program administrative errors, even if they do not receive an ART Implementation Grant

award and have to rely on other resources to implement solutions identified as a result of the Planning grant activities.

State agencies must address all of the questions in *Appendix B: ART Planning Grant Proposal Template and Instructions* to develop an ART Planning Grant application. The instructions are designed to assist State agencies in developing a fully responsive ART Planning Grant application for viable planning activities and to bring consistency to the proposal process for evaluation purposes.

The maximum amount of any *single* ART Planning Grant is **$75,000**. However, FNS retains authority to award less than the amount requested in the grant application.

Implementation Grants

Implementation grants are intended for State agencies administering the NSLP and SBP that know *what* they need to do to improve program integrity through their State's administrative training and oversight processes, but lack the resources to implement those changes. Potential uses of Implementation grant funds include, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- Developing and delivering training to LEA administrative personnel;
- Improving State-level technologies to enhance State-level monitoring capability to identify and address program administrative errors in error-prone LEAs and schools;
- Upgrading software; and
- Purchasing hardware to implement changes accordingly.

State agencies must address all of the questions in the *Appendix C: ART Implementation Grant Proposal Template and Instructions* to develop an ART Implementation Grant application. The instructions are designed to 1) guide applicants in thinking through all aspects of implementing proposed solutions, with particular emphasis on reducing risks associated with technology related aspects of their proposals, and 2) assist applicants in considering and capturing budget items such as, but not limited to, costs for personnel, hiring contractors, purchasing equipment, developing training, supplies and travel (including travel for State agency staff to attend at least one three-day annual FNS technical assistance and training meeting for grantee States). Following the guidance in Appendix C will assist applicants in developing fully responsive ART Implementation Grant applications and help to bring consistency to the proposal process for evaluation purposes.

The maximum amount of any *single* ART Implementation Grant is **$1,500,000**. However, FNS retains authority to award less than the amount requested by an applicant. The size of ART Implementation Grants will likely vary significantly, based on differences in project scope, the responsiveness of application packages, and clarity of demonstrated need.

NOTE: Applicants for the ART Implementation Grant should include in their budget estimates the following FNS sponsored collaborative activities for each year of the requested grant period of performance:

1) Estimated cost of travel and time for two State project staff to participate in an annual FNS technical assistance meeting lasting three full days at a location to be determined. Note: for budgeting purposes, State agencies should use Washington, DC as the location for the meeting (costs should be itemized);

2) Grant personnel costs to participate in quarterly technical assistance calls or webinars (generally one hour each); and

3) Personnel and contractor costs for preparation and participation in annual technical assistance and evaluation State site visits (one day each) and conference calls (approximately two per year at two hours each) with FNS contractors and staff.

The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Narrative Justification, Standard Form 424, and Standard Form 424A (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs). Sufficient funds should be budgeted in the proposal and reserved in the course of the project to meet this requirement.

C. Application and Review Dates

The deadline for submitting ART Planning Grant and ART Implementation Grant applications may be found in Section IV, D. Submission Dates and Times. FNS will process grants within approximately 90 days from the application deadline.

D. Award Periods

The award period for the FY 2015 ART Planning Grants and ART Implementation Grants will be as follows, beginning from the date of the award:

- ART Planning Grants will be awarded for up to one year; and
- ART Implementation Grants will be awarded for one to three years.

All grant funds must be obligated and all program activities under the grant (other than activities relating to the close out of the grant) must be completed by the end of the award period. The close-out of the grant must occur no later than 90 days following the end of the award period, and all obligations incurred under the grant must be liquidated by this date. Any funds that are not liquidated within 90 days following the end of the award period must be returned to FNS. In addition, the final progress reports are due to FNS no later than 90 days following the end of the award period. Please see Section VI. Federal Award Administration Information for details on reporting requirements.

III.   ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible applicants include all State agencies that administer the NSLP and SBP. In this instance, the term State agency means 1) the State educational agency; and 2) any other agency of the State which has been designated by the Governor or other appropriate executive or legislative authority of the State and approved by USDA to administer the NSLP and SBP in LEAs. Only one grant application (planning or implementation) will be accepted from a State agency in response to this solicitation. However, in instances where there are two agencies

within a State, such as in the case where the public and private agencies are different, separate applications are acceptable.

Applications received after the deadline date (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information) will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications. Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, and certification will not be considered (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information and Appendices B and C). Also, applications not submitted via the www.grants.gov portal will not be considered (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information).

There are no cost sharing or matching requirements to participate in either the ART Planning or ART Implementation grant projects.

IV.   APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applicants may obtain the RFA package by downloading the application from the FNS website at http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants or by downloading the application from the Grants.gov site at www.grants.gov website.

Applicants may also request a paper copy of this solicitation and required forms by contacting the FNS Grants Officer at:

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Gregory Walton, Branch Chief
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22302
E-mail: *(greg.walton@fns.usda.gov*

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A. Application Format

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following applicant format:

- "8 ½ by 11" page size on white paper with at least 1 inch margins on the top and bottom;
- All pages single spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font size (smaller font may be used in tables, charts and graphs as long as they are clearly readable);
- The project description with relevant information (not including the cover sheet, table of contents, resumes, letter of commitment(s), endorsement letter(s), budget narrative(s), appendices, and required forms) should be captured on no more than:
- **10-page** maximum length for **Planning** grant narrative response to **Appendix B;**
- **35-page** maximum length for **Implementation** grant narrative response to **Appendix C;** and
- All pages, excluding the form pages, must be sequentially numbered.

B. Application Content

To be considered complete, the ART Grant application must include all the required documents and information listed in the Table 1 below for the specific type of grant (i.e., planning or implementation grant).

Table 1: ART Planning and Implementation Application Content	
Required Documents	**Explanation**
Cover Sheet	At a minimum, include: - State agency name and mailing address; - Agency Administrator's name, job title, phone number, e-mail and Fax contact information - Primary application contact person's name, job title, phone number and e-mail address; and - Grant program title.
Application Project Summary	Brief abstract clearly summarizing the proposed project activities, goals and objectives, as well as anticipated solutions and outcomes that would result if the proposal is funded (maximum 250 words).
Table of Contents	Include relevant topic page numbers
Responses to ART Planning or Implementation Grant Proposal template (or similar format) **10-page** maximum length for responses to **Planning** Grant template (Questions 1- 7) **35-page** maximum length for responses to **Implementation** Grant template (Questions 1- 22) **Make sure pages are sequentially numbered**	For a grant proposal narrative to be considered complete, applicants must structure and develop their proposal and budget narratives by answering all questions listed in <u>one</u> the following appendices depending on the type of grant applying for: - ***Appendix B: ART Planning Grant Proposal Template and Instructions***; <u>or</u> - ***Appendix C: ART Implementation Grant Proposal Template and Instructions***. Applicants should address all questions in the applicable appendices in the order they are listed. The instructions are intended to simplify both the narrative development for applicants and the evaluation process for reviewers. 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. The budget narrative details should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. The budget narrative must justify and support the bona fide needs of the budget's direct costs, clearly showing how the budget

Table 1: ART Planning and Implementation Application Content	
Required Documents	**Explanation**
	components were developed and costs estimated.
	If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant <u>must</u> provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement and show how the rate was applied to allowable direct costs.
Form SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance	Link to form at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html or http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants
Form SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Link to form at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html or http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants
Form SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs	Link to form at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html or http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants
Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Indicate on the form whether your organization intends to conduct lobbying activities. If you organization does not intend to lobby, write "Not Applicable." Link to form at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html or http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement	If Indirect Costs are included in the budget, applicants must provide a copy of their agency's most current approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a Federal agency.
Justification for Sole Source Contracts	If contractual costs are included in the budget estimate and the contractor is (or will be) acquired without competition, the applicant must provide a justification for a sole source contract with copies/references to State statutes, regulations and policies that support the sole source decision.

C. Electronic Submission

The complete application must be uploaded to www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time, on
<mark>(RFA DUE DATE</mark>). Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed ineligible and
will not be reviewed or considered. USDA will no consider any additions or revisions to an

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application once it is received. USDA will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications.

Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) Number

In order to submit an application via www.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. 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/).

DUNS Number: In order to obtain a DUNS number, if your organization does not have one, or if you are unsure of your organization's number you can 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. Obtaining a DUNS number may take several days to obtain.

System for Award Management (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. For detailed information regarding SAM see the following link: https://www.acquisition.gov/SAM_Guides/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registrations%20v1.pdf

Below is additional information that should assist the applicant through this process:

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. SAM verifies all information submitted by the applicant using several systems. This verification takes at least **48 hours** after your registration is submitted to SAM. Applicants must have a valid SAM registration no later than 3 days prior to the application due date of this solicitation. **Applicants that do not receive confirmation that SAM registration is complete and active should contact SAM at: https://www.fsd.gov/app/answers/list**.

SAM Presentation/Training: The U.S. General Services Administration has created a presentation of a SAM training. To view the presentation, please visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmHcKCchaiY

This will be extremely useful for SAM users that are:
- Registering at SAM for the first time;
- Setting up user permissions from CCR into the SAM registration (called migrating); or
- Updating/renewing CCR record in SAM.

PLEASE BE AWARE: In some instances the process to complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of the entity record will require **5-7 days or more**. We strongly encourage grantees to begin the process at least **3 weeks before** grant the due date of the grant solicitation.

Grants.gov Registration

In order to apply for a grant, your organization must have completed the above registrations as well as register on Grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process can be accessed at www.grants.govapplicants/get_reistered.jsp. Generally, the registration process takes between **3 to 5 business days**.

Allow your entity ample time to complete the necessary steps, for the submission of your grant application package, on www.grants.gov.

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.

NOTICE: Special Characters not Supported: All applicants **MUST** follow Grants.gov guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided in the Grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Are there restrictions on file names for any attachment I include with my application package?

File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (example: &,–,*,%,/,#', -), this includes periods (.), spacing followed by a dash in the file and for word separation, use underscore (example: Attached_File.pdf) in naming the attachments. **Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected. FNS will not accept any application rejected from www.grants.gov portal due to incorrect naming conventions.**

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 SAM 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/).

 D. Application Confirmation

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. Once the confirmation notice that the application has been accepted by the system is received, applicants must then send an email to notify the FNS Grant Officer that the proposal has been submitted through the

www.grants.gov portal and that they have received a confirmation notice from www.grants.gov that the application has been accepted by the system.   It is recommended that you submit the online application at least two weeks before the application deadline so you may resolve any submission issues.

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E. Submission Dates and Times

The complete ART Grant application (planning or implementation) must be uploaded on www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time **(insert the due date)**. Applications received after the deadline date will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed or considered. FNS will not accept mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications. Applications submitted without the required supporting documents, forms, certification will not be considered. Applications not submitted via the Grants.gov portal will not be considered.

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

F. Funding Restrictions

In addition to the administrative requirements contained in this RFA, the provisions below will also be a part of the agreement between FNS and the State agency.

- Funds authorized cannot be used to replace existing funding (e.g., State Administrative Expense (SAE) funds) earmarked by the State agency for administrative review, oversight and training.
- Funds cannot be used for local-level expenses.
- Funds cannot be used to shift existing staff from their normal duties paid with State Administrative Expense (SAE) funds to support the grant activities unless the staff that are reassigned are replaced with additional staff in the positions that are vacant.
- Funds must be expended in accordance with activities outlined in the applicant's approved proposal.
- Funding for approved proposals will be provided through the Letter of Credit process in the same manner as other funds. However, State agencies will be required to separately track and report these funds via SF-425 Financial Status Report.
- Funds authorized under the ART Grants cannot be used to replace or augment funding allocated for existing review requirements. In addition, pursuant to Section 7(g) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, funds authorized cannot be used to replace funding allocated for training in administrative practices (including training in application, certification,

verification, meal counting and meal claiming procedures) which is required to occur at a minimum of once a year.

V.   APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Review Criteria & Evaluation Factors
FNS will evaluate the applications in accordance with the criteria outlined in this section to select applications for awards**.** The actual number of awards will depend on the quality of the applications and the availability of funds. Funds will be made available via a Cooperative Agreement award document following the award announcements.

A. Initial Screening

FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure that they contain the required documents and information. Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements:
1. Submitted by eligible applicants (see Section III, Eligibility Information);
2. Submitted on or before the required deadline (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information);
3. Are complete (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information); and
4. Are in the required format (see Section IV, Application and Submission 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.

B. Review Process

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 the proposals based on how well they address the required application components. The panel will assign each application a score using the evaluation criteria and weights as specified below for each planning or implementation grant application evaluation component. The peer panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on the evaluation scoring.

1. **Scoring for Planning Grant Applications:**

- **Project Purpose, Goals and Impact on Program Integrity (35 points)**
  - The significance of the Program administrative errors, or the risk of these errors, to be addressed is clearly demonstrated and proposed planning activities are appropriate to address the administrative errors identified;
  - The project goals and objectives are in line with the ART Planning Grant focus areas and purpose of the funding described in Section II, Federal Award Information;
  - The planning activities to be completed during the grant period clearly support;

- Identification of ways to reduce program administrative errors in error-prone LEAs and schools; and
- Planning for implementation of solutions to improve program integrity, including the areas of application, certification, verification, meal counting and meal claiming.

- **Project Planning Design and Management (35 points)**
  - The project organization, project management approach (including staffing, procurement of contractors, communications planning, quality assurance planning, risk management planning, partnering with appropriate stakeholders, tracking timelines, monitoring progress, etc.) indicate that the applicant has the capacity to manage and execute the planning project successfully to meet the goals of the project; and
  - The scope and timeline proposed for the project are reasonable and attainable during the Planning grant time frame.

- **Budget Plan (20 points)**
  - The total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project;
  - Proposed costs are reasonable, necessary and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives;
  - The budget includes a line item description for every allowable cost and shows how it supports the project goals;
  - Budget calculations and documentation show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated; and
  - If indirect costs are included, the applicant agency's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a Federal agency is provided and the indirect cost rate is applied correctly to allowable direct costs.

- **Sustainability and Transferability (10 points)**
  - The proposed planning project is likely to produce outcomes and information that not only will aid the applicant State agency in implementing program improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects; and
  - The applicant demonstrates that the State agency has the capacity to implement program improvements in follow-up to the Planning grant activities, when ART Planning Grant funding ends.

2. **Scoring for Implementation Grant Applications:**

- **Project Purpose, Goals and Impact on Program Integrity (35 points)**
  - The significance of the Program administrative errors, or the risk of these errors, to be addressed is clearly demonstrated and proposed implementation activities are appropriate to address the administrative errors identified;
  - The project goals and objectives are in line with the ART Grant focus areas and purpose of the funding described in Section II, Federal Award Information;

- The implementation activities to be completed during the grant period clearly support:
  o Reduction of program administrative errors in error-prone LEAs and schools; and
  o Implementation of viable solutions to improve program integrity, including the areas of application, certification, verification, meal counting and meal claiming; and
- The performance measures and methods for evaluating project performance during the grant period and impact to program integrity after project completion are realistic, measureable and clearly defined.

- **Project Planning Design and Management (35 points)**
  - The project organization, project management approach (including staffing, procurement of contractors, communications planning, quality assurance planning, risk management planning, system development lifecycle process planning where applicable, partnering with appropriate stakeholders, tracking timelines, measuring performance, monitoring progress, etc.) indicate that the applicant has the capacity to manage and execute the implementation project successfully to meet the goals of the project; and
  - The scope and timeline proposed for the project are reasonable and attainable during the Implementation grant time frame.

- **Budget Plan (20 points)**
  - The total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project;
  - Proposed costs are reasonable, necessary and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives;
  - The budget includes a line item description for every estimated cost and shows how it supports the project goals;
  - Budget calculations and documentation show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated;
  - If indirect costs are included, the applicant agency's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a Federal agency is provided and the indirect cost rate is applied correctly to allowable direct costs.

- **Sustainability and Transferability (10 points)**
  - The proposed implementation project is likely to produce outcomes and information that not only will aid the applicant State agency in accomplishing program improvements, but also will produce knowledge that is transferable to other State agencies for similar improvement projects; and
  - The applicant demonstrates that the State agency has the capacity to implement and sustain the program improvements resulting from the Implementation grant activities after the ART Implementation Grant funding ends.

C. Selection Process

After evaluation and scoring, grant applications will be arrayed by type (planning or implementation) and by score within the type, starting with the highest score. Applications with the highest scores for each type will be recommended to receive funding. FNS intends to award up to a total of $300,000 in ART Planning Grants. The remaining available funds will be awarded as Implementation grants to the highest scoring Implementation grant applications.

Grantees will be selected on a competitive basis, based on an objective review of their proposals according to the technical evaluation criteria outlined in this RFA. A list of all applications deemed eligible for award will be submitted to the Selection Official for a final decision regarding funding. The Selection Official has ultimate authority to decide which applications are approved and funded, and *generally* will adhere to the recommendations made by the reviewers, provided that funding is available. However, the Selection Official reserves the right to award a grant to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, or project diversity. The Selection Official may take other factors into account when granting awards and/or not awarding a particular award.

Other USDA or FNS priorities the Selection Official may consider include, but are not limited to, the innovation demonstrated in an application, agency priorities, and the scores assigned by the technical review panels. The Selection Official may also determine that, based on their scores, few of the applications are of technical merit. In such a case, FNS may make fewer awards or smaller awards than expected, or make no awards. In addition, FNS reserves the option to select one or more lower rated applications in order to achieve a diversity of projects and regional representation. 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.

D. Determination of Award Amounts

As part of the technical review process, FNS will review applicants' proposed budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable and applicable. Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, FNS reserves the right to fund applications out of rank order to achieve priorities identified earlier; or at lesser amounts if FNS determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

FNS will review and consider the merit of each grant application and reserves the right to fund only those applications that are able to demonstrate their capability to improve their State's administrative processes and error rates. Additionally, FNS may adjust the amounts requested in the application to ensure that funds are made available at appropriate levels. FNS also reserves the right to suspend or terminate an award for materially failing to perform in accordance with a State's application.

VI.   FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notice

Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions, any contact from an 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.

B. Administrative and National Policy 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. Any 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.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

Federal Tax Liabilities Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

Felony Crime Conviction Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

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 System for Award Management (SAM) database, and suspension and debarment information from the SAM. 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.

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

This grant will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations 2 CFR, Subtitle A, Chapter II. 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 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards
- 2 CFR Part 400 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards
- 2 CFR Part 415: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations"
- 2 CFR Part 416: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments"

- 2 CFR Part 417: "Office of the Chief Financial Officer: Department of Agriculture Implementation of OMB Guidance on Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension"
- 2 CFR Part 418 USDA "New Restrictions on Lobbying"
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA "Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)"
- 41 U.S.C. Section 22 "Interest of Member of Congress"
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Public access to Federal Financial Assistance records shall not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have been excepted from disclosure pursuant to the "Freedom of Information" regulation (5 U.S.C. 552)

General Terms and Conditions of the award may be obtained electronically. Please contact the Grants Officer at:

<div align="center">

Gregory Walton, Branch Chief
Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail: greg.walton@fns.usda.gov

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C. Reporting

All State agencies receiving FY 2015 Administrative Review and Training Method II Grants are required to submit the following reports in accordance with the deadlines noted.

Financial Reporting

The award recipient will be required to submit quarterly (based on Federal FY) SF-425, Financial Status Report data and a final SF-425 financial report electronically into the FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS). In order to access FPRS, the grant recipient must obtain USDA e-authentication certification and access to FPRS. More detailed instructions regarding data entry into FPRS, reporting format and dates will be included in the FNS Federal financial assistance award package.

Progress Reporting

Progress Reports must be submitted quarterly and include **(in narrative form)**: 1) a brief description of the planned activities for the report period; 2) accomplishments for each activity and completion dates; 3) a description of any deviations from the approved plan—this summary should discuss difficulties encountered and solutions developed; 4) any other unique aspects that would be useful to share; and 5) an overview of plans for the coming quarter. In addition, a final progress report is due to FNS no later than 90 days following the end of the award period. Completion dates and the process for reporting will be provided to those receiving awards.

The recipient may be required to submit performance/progress reports to FNS using SF-PPR, Periodic Progress Report. Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the award terms and conditions, including results of the grant project.

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. The recipient may be required to submit performance/progress reports to FNS using SF-PPR, Periodic Progress Report.

VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this solicitation, please contact the Grants Officer at:

Gregory Walton, Branch Chief
Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive Room 740
Alexandra, VA 22301
E-mail: greg.walton@fns.usda.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Projects that Include U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Place Based Initiatives

Proposals with projects that include interventions in communities that have been designated USDA Place Based Initiatives will receive five bonus points. The USDA Place Based Initiatives include but are not limited to:

1. **StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity (SF)** – StrikeForce aims to create self-sustaining, long-term economic development in persistent poverty rural communities by increasing investment through intensive outreach and stronger partnership with community leaders, businesses, and foundations. StrikeForce seeks to improve food security by increasing access to safe and nutritious foods.

2. **Promise Zones** (**PZ)** - Promise Zones are part of the President's plan where the Federal government partners with and invests in selected high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities. Promise Zones leverage Federal resources to build up existing local capacity to create jobs, increase economic security, leverage private investment, expand educational opportunities, increase access to quality affordable housing, reduce violent crime and improve public safety.

3. **White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2)** – As part of the President's priority to strengthen the middle class, create jobs, and build ladders of opportunity, SC2 seeks to increase cooperation between community organizations, local leadership, and the federal government. SC2 pairs on the ground Federal inter-agency teams with the Mayor and city leadership to support the community's vision for economic development. These SC2 Teams offer technical assistance and expertise to help leverage existing Federal resources to grow local capacity and stimulate economic growth in distressed areas.

4. **Partnership for Sustainable Communities** - The Partnership for Sustainable Communities works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

5. **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)** - KYF2 strengthens the connection between farmers and consumers to better meet critical goals, including reinvigorating rural economies, promoting job growth, and increasing healthy and local food access in America. Through KYF2, USDA integrates programs and policies that stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development, foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers, and cultivate healthy eating habits and educated consumers.

A. 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 Grant Applicant Forms section of this RFA?
- ✓ Have you included the RFA CFDA # 10.579 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.

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. *You do not need to 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.

RFA BUDGET CHECKLIST	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 a 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.		

FOR GRANT APPLICANT USE ONLY.
DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM WITH THE APPLICATION