

Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)

Frequently Asked Questions March 2021

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Eligibility Questions

1. May a non-profit organization apply to be a reporting and evaluation center?

See Part III, A of the RFA for more information on eligibility requirements. NIFA is not accepting cooperative agreement applications for Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers program area in 2021.

2. Can a university/university extension apply as the primary applicant for GusNIP?

Institutions of Higher Education and state cooperative extension services are eligible to apply for cooperative agreements in the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers program area. However, applications are not invited for this program area in 2021.

Eligible entities for GusNIP nutrition incentive grants and produce prescription grants are limited to government agencies and non-profit organizations. Collaborating with institutions of higher education and other partners is encouraged.

The definition of a non-profit organization in [2 CFR 200](#) as follows:

Nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization, not including Institution of Higher Education, that:

- (1) Is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest;
- (2) Is not organized primarily for profit; and
- (3) Uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization.

3. How does NIFA want health care providers to verify that a patient is enrolled in Medicaid for PPR eligibility?

The applicant and their partners are responsible for screening and verifying eligibility for members for participation in a produce prescription project. Individuals can participate in a produce prescription project if they are eligible for the following: (1) Benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 USC 2011 et seq.); or (2) medical assistance under a State plan or a waiver of such a plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 USC 1392 et seq.) and enrolled under such plan or waiver; and (3) a member of a low-income household that suffers from, or is at risk of developing, a diet-related health condition.

One way to verify that a patient enrolled in Medicaid is eligible to participate in a produce prescription project is proof of enrollment in the Medicaid medical assistance plan via Proof of Insurance and the patient is a member of a low-income household that suffers from, or is at risk of developing, a diet-related health condition.

Program Policy Questions

1. Do grocery stores participating in GusNIP/PPR programs have to source a percentage of produce locally or regionally?

No, providing locally and regionally produced fruits and vegetables is one of the GusNIP priorities, but it is not required.

2. Do farmers markets have to be open 40 hours a week to participate in GusNIP/PPR programs?

No, farmers markets do not have to have extended hours. GusNIP priorities include involving firms with extended hours and days of operations, but it is not required.

3. Do GusNIP programs have to have a produce-for-produce design? Meaning that a SNAP shopper must buy produce to earn an incentive benefit to buy produce?

GusNIP allows incentives to be earned when a SNAP shopper buys qualifying fruits and vegetables or a SNAP eligible food. GusNIP allows the use of incentives only for qualifying fruits and vegetables.

Applicants may submit proposals for projects using the grant period to develop and implement an innovative technology improvement, system of benefit redemption, or incentive system that supports the *GusNIP qualifying F/V for GusNIP qualifying F/V* incentive model.

Incentive models that require no purchase with SNAP benefits are not allowable under GusNIP nutrition incentive grants. Nutrition incentive grants require spending SNAP benefits to earn incentives.

However, produce prescription grants may use a no purchase required model

FNS and NIFA continue to provide support to grantees completing previously awarded projects.

The financial incentive models for GusNIP nutrition incentive grants are as follows.

- i. *GusNIP qualifying F/V for GusNIP qualifying F/V*: SNAP households purchase GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables using their SNAP benefits and then these households receive incentives that are redeemable only for the purchase of GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables.
- ii. *Any SNAP eligible food for GusNIP qualifying F/V*: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households purchase any SNAP eligible food using their SNAP benefits and then these households receive incentives that are redeemable only for the purchase of GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables.

4. Can PPR project proposals request to include canned/frozen F/V in addition to fresh?

No. To be eligible to receive a Produce Prescription Grant an eligible entity must prescribe any variety of fresh whole or cut fruits and vegetables to members; and either provide financial or non-financial incentives for members to purchase or procure fresh fruits and vegetables; provide educational resources on nutrition to members; or establish additional accessible locations for members to procure fresh fruits and vegetables.

The primary purpose of the Produce Prescription Grants is to conduct projects that demonstrate and evaluate the impact of the projects on (1) the improvement of dietary health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables; (2) the reduction of individual and household food insecurity; and (3) the reduction in healthcare use and associated costs.

5. What information must be included in an MOU with a participating firm?

See Part I, D of the RFA for more information on program policy (<https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rfa/FY21-GusNIP-MOD-RFA-508.pdf>).

6. Does the FNS July 2018 notice regarding retailer approval still apply? (<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/FINI-Equal-Treatment-Reporting-Notice.pdf>)

No. The process for allowable participation of firms in GusNIP grant projects is outlined in the Part I, D of the RFA. Before a firm can participate in a GusNIP grant project, the following steps must occur in this order (this process may take 60 calendar days):

- i. If the firm is not already SNAP authorized, the firm applies for and obtains SNAP Authorization;
- ii. The grantee and firm sign a MOU;
- iii. The grantee submits to FNS the firm’s information (i.e., FNS, firm name, firm address) as a password protected list, which can be submitted using a format similar to what is listed below and emailed to sm.fn.gusnip@usda.gov; and,
- iv. FNS responds within 30 calendars days to approve or deny the participation of the firm.

Row #	Grantee Name	FNS#	Store Name	Street Number	Street Name	Addl Addr (e.g. Suite #)	City	State Abbr (2-letter)	Zip (5-digit)	Phone #	Participation Start Date	Participation End Date

7. May an organization apply to coordinate reporting and evaluation functions and subcontract with other groups to perform training and technical assistance functions?

Yes, partnerships and collaborations are encouraged. When planning collaborations award recipients may sub-award to organizations including organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

8. Are incentives for evaluation allowed (e.g., farmers market consumers completing surveys)? If so, should that be included in the evaluation budget, or the grantees budget?

Incentives for completing surveys are not an allowable cost.

9. Who are participant surveys directed towards?

Since SNAP may not be a requirement for participation, surveys are intended for any participant. However, the sample size is intended to be yearly.

Program Area Questions

1. Must State SNAP agencies sign off on any GusNIP grant application?

Nutrition incentive grant applications must include SNAP State Agency letter of support as part of their application.

Produce prescription grant applications must include documentation of a partnership agreement with a relevant State Medicaid agency, hospital, hospital or clinic operated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Federally qualified health center, healthcare provider group, Tribal health center, public health departments or private and public health insurance agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the produce prescription project in reducing healthcare use and associate costs and may submit a SNAP State Agency letter of support if they involve SNAP-authorized firms in their project design. Additionally, if PPR projects will work with SNAP firms then the MOU process must be followed.

2. Who is the GusNIP NTAE Center? Is there more than one?

The GusNIP Nutrition Incentive Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE) Center is led by the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. In partnership with Fair Food Network, they created the Nutrition Incentive Hub, a coalition of partners including the Farmer's Market Coalition, National Grocers Association Foundation, Michigan Farmers Market Association, and Ecology Center. The Nutrition Incentive Hub is a coalition of partners that supports nutrition incentive and produce prescription projects. Currently there is only one GusNIP NTAE Center.

3. What information needs to be included in a letter of support?

These letters should acknowledge the support and contributions of partner organizations, provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and decision-making. Additionally, letters of support for each key organization are limited to two (2) pages.

4. Do PPR standard projects and GusNIP projects (FIP) need to test new technologies?

PPR standard projects may test/pilot new systems, they are not required to.

Nutrition incentive GusNIP Projects (FIP) include but are not limited to testing innovative strategies and point of purchase technology with SNAP authorized firms. However, FIP proposals are expected to take advantage of available technology.

5. Do PPR grant projects need to serve all residents in an entire county?

PPR pilot projects may be proposed by groups developing program at less than the county level. A pilot project in one healthcare facility is eligible. Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project.

6. Do PPR pilot projects need to be under \$100,000 for up to 1-year in duration?

Project proposals submitted to the PPR program area (pilot projects or standard projects) may be for up to 3 years in duration and of \$500,000 or less. All PPR program area grantees are required to participate in the comprehensive GusNIP evaluation.

7. Must participants in PPR grant projects be receiving SNAP or eligible for SNAP?

Being eligible for SNAP is one part of determining eligibility to participate in a produce prescription project. It is not the only criterion for eligibility, and it is not required. Individuals can participate in the Produce Prescription Grant program if they are eligible for the following: (1) benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or (2) medical assistance under a State plan or a waiver of such a plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and enrolled under such plan or waiver; and (3) a member of a low-income household that suffers from, or is at risk of developing, a diet-related health condition.

To be eligible to participate in a produce prescription project the individual may either meet items (1) and (3) or items (2) and (3) above.

Fund Matching Questions

1. Is it allowable to use a pro-rated amount for office space as a form of qualifying match for nutrition incentive grants?

Yes. Rental costs may be pro-rated and the portion of use charged to the award, either under the Federal funds or matching, if that is the normal procedure for that organization. The Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part [200.403](#) states that all costs should be accorded consistent treatment. Therefore, if other funding is provided the organization, or they participate in other projects which use their facility, those projects should also be charged their fair share of the rent. If the organization receives funding from other sources for projects, and those projects are not charged rent fees, then this grant project should not be charged. They should be sure to document how the pro-ration was determined, and to keep records accordingly for audit purposes. Please refer to the Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part [200.465](#) for specific information on rental costs.

2. Exactly what match verification is to be included with a GusNIP nutrition incentive grant application?

While you should obtain matching commitment letters from each of your third parties which explain the dollar amount of the match, the period of time the matching will be provided, and how it can/will be spent on the project, these do not need to be included in the application. You must keep these on file for audit purposes. You should include in the application a listing of matching sources to include the name of the organization, the dollar amount of the matching, and provide a budget breakout on how these funds will be spent.

3. Should match verification be submitted as appendix to the nutrition incentive grant application?

No, it should be provided with the budget information.

Application Questions

1. Can organizations submit more than one application?

The same organization may submit one Produce Prescription Grant (PPR program area) alone or in addition to one Nutrition Incentive Grant (FPP, FIP, or FLSP program areas). Applicants are encouraged to think critically about their organization's capacity to complete the work proposed.

2. When is the estimated start date for funded applicants?

The start date of the grant must be no later than September 30, 2021.

3. Do the 5 pages in the project narrative for charts and tables have to be at the end or can they be woven throughout?

Tables and figures may be woven throughout the project narrative. Regardless of where they are located within the narrative the limit of 5 pages and requirement that the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Time New Roman still apply.

4. Are the 3 pages for activities to achieve the project goals included in the 5 pages of tables?

Yes. The recommendation to include a table of no more than three pages with implementation details for activities to achieve the goals of the project counts toward the 5 pages of tables and figures within the project narrative.

5. What is the difference between the tables and figures in project narrative compared to the appendix?

Information required in the project narrative must be included in the project narrative. The appendices are for additional information directly relevant to evaluating the proposed project, including appendices prescribed in the RFA, such as logic model, sustainability plan, data management plan, etc.

6. Are Medicaid, Medicare, and VA health plans the only ones that qualify as State health plans?

State-run health plans (e.g. Medicaid, Medicare, and Veterans Affairs) qualify participants as eligible for PPR programs.

7. Is there a template partnership agreement for State Medicaid Agency?

A template Medicaid State Agency Agreement is available at:
<https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/gusnip-app>

8. Do indirect costs count within the <20% admin costs?

No, indirect costs are separate from the administration and management costs referenced in the RFA.

9. Should the names, addresses, and FNS numbers of all participating firms/retailers be included in the application and counted towards the 15-page limit?

In the case of large, region, and national projects with a high number of participating sites and retail firms, the Specific Program Incentive Information, items 12-14 may be provided in an appendix; this will not count towards the 15-page limit and please do not make the font size any smaller than 10.

10. Should projects document the new budget category requirements within the Budget Justification document, or is there another place?

Anything to do with the budget information should be provided in the Budget and Budget Justification section.

11. Based on the information from the RFA, this sounds to us like we can submit our indirect cost rate that we have calculated from audits (but is not a federally negotiated rate yet), and if awarded we will go through the process of submitting the indirect rate package for review. Does this sound accurate?

You may estimate what you think your indirect cost rate is and the amount and put that on the budget pending negotiation. However, please note, it may take six to nine months to negotiate a rate if NIFA is your cognizant negotiating agency. The funds for the indirect costs will not be released for payment until the rate has been approved.

12. Is there any subaward restriction?

The RFA Funding Restrictions require no more than 33% of the budget be sub-awarded without prior NIFA approval from the National Program Leader.

13. Is there technical assistance provided before and/or after the grant is awarded?

The Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE) provides support to both grantees and applicants for nutrition incentive grants and produce prescription grants. Resources and support are available at: <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/gusnip-app> and TA@nutritionincentivehub.org

Project and Grant Types Questions

1. Will the cooperative agreement(s) for NTAE be rebid every year?

No. Cooperative agreements will be recompleted every four (4) years.

2. Should applicants for NTAE include proposed plans for years beyond FY 2020 based on potential continued funding?

These are 4-year projects. The GusNIP grant program is not accepting applications for Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation and Information Centers (NTAE) cooperative agreements in 2021. Applications will be invited again in FY2023.

3. What are some expected outcomes for FIP grants?

Examples of FIPs may include, but are not limited to, innovative strategies, and technology working at point of purchase with SNAP authorized firms, including food stores, market stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, marketing and consumer cooperatives, and other SNAP authorized firms to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables and consumption of fruits and vegetables by consumer participating in SNAP. Outcomes should describe specific changes or results that will occur as a consequence of the project and that will constitute "success" for the initiative, including a general description of the range of fruits and vegetables that would be incentivized (such as, but not limited to, fresh, canned, or dried forms). All FIPs grantees will be required to collect core participant-level and firm-level metrics, cooperate with and contribute core participant-level and firm-level data to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers (NTAE). More details are available at: <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/core-metrics-snap>

COVID-19 Response Questions

1. Does NIFA have COVID-19 resource?

USDA NIFA provided a [NIFA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources for Partners](#) and [NIFA Coronavirus FAQs](#).

2. Can program participants earn incentives on purchases made with Pandemic-SNAP or Disaster-SNAP benefits?

USDA FNS released COVID-19 FAQ document addresses questions around [State Guidance on Coronavirus Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\)](#) and [Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(D-SNAP\)](#).

3. How does the emergency funding impact my current GusNIP award?

There are no changes to the expectations for current grant projects.

4. How does the emergency funding impact the 2021 GusNIP RFA?

As described in the 2021 GusNIP RFA, the RFA was published prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY2021 and contained the approximate level of funding for this program. Enactment of the appropriations act may increase the amount available for grants in FY2021.

For additional questions, please see contact information in the RFA