

**Agricultural Food and Research (AFRI) Initiative FY 2015  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program  
(SNAP and EFNEP): Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence  
AFRI-RNECE – FY 2015**

Please note, the AFRI RNECE RFA can be found at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-childhood-obesity-prevention-challenge>. All other communications regarding the AFRI-RNECE RFA can be found on this page – the RNECE webpage, <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/program/regional-nutrition-education-and-obesity-prevention-centers-excellence-rnece>.

Included here (on the RNECE page) are:

- 1) AFRI – RNECE RFA – overview webinar – <http://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/p27egcmvd6t>.
- 2) Updated webinar slides, which include **new pictures and links consistent with NIFA’s redesigned website. Check this document for corrected links if the links listed in the RFA do not work. Additionally, you may need to refresh your browser.**
- 3) Frequently asked questions about the RFA – with NIFA’s response – **updated regularly**
- 4) Other supporting information and documents.

After you have reviewed these resources, if you still cannot find answers to your questions, contact, Ms. Marly Diallo or Helen Chipman.

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**ALL FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS, regarding the AFRI-RNECE will be posted here – on the RNECE webpage. Most recent questions and responses are listed at the top of the Q&A page.**

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**Questions from 3-23 to 3-25 (I will be out of the office the remainder of the week and so am posting early)**

**Signature Research Program and Sub-Award Requirements for New Standard Grants**

During the webinars you commented that applicants should follow both the new RFA and the RFA from 2014. In the 2014 RFA, centers were expected to conduct a signature research project and to fund several small subawards. Is that an expectation for the new Regional Center that will focus on PSEs?

It is true that requirements for the FY2014 RNECE RFA also apply to the FY 2015 RFA – see item 2, Other Program Requirements on Page 16 of the RFA. By design, the establishment of regional signature projects and use of subawards has already been addressed in how the FY 2015 RFA RFA was written. To explain further, the new regional center already has a signature research focus – Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change. Specific elements of the research design are listed on pages 12-14 of the RFA. The requirement of sub-awards is not explicitly stated. However, item 7 on page 13, lends itself to the inclusion of sub-awards to leverage and

extend the work that is done. So, in this case, sub-awards would be encouraged, but are not required.

Signature research projects function within the structure of the regional centers. Therefore, the new signature research project needs to connect in some way with one of the regional centers. However, it does not have to be funded at one of the regional centers. Also, the signature research project would not require sub-awards, since that is a stipulation of the regional centers, not the specific research projects.

### **More on Eligibility – Including Sub-Awards for Current Regional Centers**

We are having a difficult time determining whether or not we are eligible to apply. There seems to be some conflicting information in the announcement and the RFA – can you please clarify? If for some reason we are unable to apply, are we still allowed to be a subcontractor?

As noted on page 17 of the RFA, for the new RNECE projects (e.g. the new standard grants), eligibility depends on at least one of three criteria:

- 1) Land grants universities that have EFNEP – e.g. all 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions
- 2) SNAP-Ed implementing agencies – I have explained these in some detail both in the webinar that I presented and in the questions that I have addressed – see below.
- 3) Other non-profit organizations/agencies that have developed and/or delivered and/or evaluated similar low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention programs – supporting evidence is required. See the RFA.

Please note, these eligibility criteria apply only to the RNECE new standard grants. They do not apply to other potential funding opportunities within the AFRI Childhood Obesity Prevention RFA.

If you meet any of these criteria you would be eligible to apply directly. If not, you could still participate as a member of an existing Regional Center or collaborate with others who are eligible to apply for one of the new standard grants. They would need to either write you into their grant application and/or identify another way of including you in their regional efforts. See <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/regional-nutrition-education-and-obesity-prevention-centers-excellence-rnece>. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the RNECE Regional & National Coordination Center Contacts document to find your regional center contact.

Another way you might become involved in the new RNECE initiative is to check with your regional center about sub-awards that are available or may soon be available to see if you are eligible for one of those.

### **eXtension Community of Practice – What is Expected in Order to Secure a Letter of Support**

What are the expectations for an agreement between the Community Nutrition Community of Practice (COP) and the regional centers? Is a general letter of support sufficient? What about copyright issues? What about linking with other websites?

The regional centers, potentially, will have a significant place within the eXtension Community Nutrition COP. Exactly what that presence will be and how information will be linked and shared is yet to be worked out. It is likely that the regional centers will help inform such decisions in order to make information readily and appropriately available, whatever the venue may be.

In order to secure a letter of support from the Community Nutrition COP, applicants should draft a letter to the COP contact, and include potential ways that they may work together. Some examples might be providing content, contributing to the design and specific elements, and/or contributing time and resources if substantively further developing the site. Helping to build out the RNECE component of the COP would be an expectation of all awardees. This would be done in cooperation with the owners and managers of the site.

For quick reference, the site contact is Ms. Sandy Jensen, [Sandra.jensen@sdstate.edu](mailto:Sandra.jensen@sdstate.edu); or 605-688-4944. Sandy's contact information is also listed on the Community Nutrition COP homepage.

### Questions from 3-11 to 3-22

#### Resubmissions

If we submitted an application for the RNECE RFA last year and were not selected should we send a new proposal or resubmit the previous proposal with corrections, i.e. will our application be considered a resubmission or a new applicant for the RNECE Research Center?

It is appropriate to send a new submission rather than a resubmission with corrections, since the specific focus of the two new projects differ from those of the previously funded centers, and since the source of funding is also different, which results in some different requirements for this round of proposals. You are also encouraged to review comments from your previous submission to ensure that they are addressed in the new proposal, as some, if not all comments, may still apply.

#### New Standard Grant – Signature Research Project

Several questions have been received about trying new approaches for the signature research project and then measuring those for participants and non-participants. Questions pertained to whether the new approaches could be used, especially as pertains to EFNEP. Question also been raised about NIFA's desire for long-term studies to see if short-term results are reflected over time – i.e. is NIFA still interested in long-term studies?

The intent of the signature research project is to focus on current nutrition education/obesity prevention approaches being used, whether long-term or more recent, and to determine what, if any longer term changes are identified in participants' behaviors. EFNEP and SNAP-Ed are both reporting changes as a result of program participation. What we need is stronger evidence of changes that are observed among participants vs. non-participants, and changes that continue beyond recent participation. The intent of this signature project is to begin to look at changes over time in a more rigorous manner.

#### Centers of Excellence

Recently, I participated in a webinar about USDA Centers of Excellence implementation, but it is unclear to me whether this RFA is for the same kind of Center of Excellence as discussed in the webinar. From that webinar, I understood that Center of Excellence status would be an "add-on" for a research or integrated grant, and seeking Center of Excellence status was not required but would be a factor if reviewers rated two proposals equally. For A2151, however, creation of such a center seems to be a central goal. It appears to me that this is a different kind of proposal, for a center that will be affiliated with existing centers. Could you clarify?

You are correct in your understanding of the add-on value of the Centers of Excellence for the USDA Centers of Excellence. You are also correct that the SNAP and EFNEP Nutrition Education

and Obesity Prevention Regional Centers of Excellence (RNECE) grants represent a different type of grant – the creation of regional centers. As noted in the webinar that I gave on March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> regarding the RNECE component of the Childhood Obesity RFA, the “USDA Centers of Excellence” criteria does not apply for the RNECE grants.

### **Regional Expectations**

On page 12 of the RFA, under “General Applications,” it states that applicants should involve collaborations of multiple institutions/organizations **and** multiple states. We have a multidisciplinary group involving several universities within our state. Do we need to bring in faculty from other states?

The intent of these grants is that they are expected to bring together expertise from multiple states and organizations – to be truly “regional” in nature. For the geographically bound regional centers last year, reviewers looked for inclusivity of states within the regions. For the new topic based regional center, I would anticipate that strong proposals would reach out broadly for PSE expertise – thinking of states, institutions, and organizations that would have the expertise that would be helpful to EFNEP and SNAP-Ed – in order to strengthen potential national application .

### **Eligible vs. Implementing Agencies**

Please clarify what is meant by eligible and/or implementing agencies with respect to EFNEP and SNAP-Ed? Who would we need to partner with if we are not an EFNEP and/or SNAP-Ed implementing agency?

The terms eligible and implementing can seem confusing from a competitive grants mindset and to those who are not familiar with EFNEP and SNAP-Ed funding. Similar to other types of grants, eligible organizations/agencies are those that are defined by legislation as being able to apply for funding. In contrast to competitive grants, the distribution of funds for EFNEP and SNAP-Ed are formula based – as per federal legislation. As an example, EFNEP funding is based, in part on state poverty levels. All 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions are eligible, do apply, and meet other EFNEP programmatic requirements each year. Thus they can be considered both eligible and implementing organizations/agencies for EFNEP. For a map and listing of land-grant institutions see <http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-map>.

SNAP-Ed funding is administered a bit differently. State SNAP Agencies are eligible to receive the funds, and in most cases contract with “implementing” agencies to conduct the program, as noted below.

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### **Questions from RFA training and thru 3-10**

#### **Eligibility**

Who can apply for the new standard grants, e.g. the new regional center and the new signature research project?

Three types of organizations/agencies are eligible to apply: 1) EFNEP implementing agencies; 2) SNAP-Ed implementing agencies; and 3) non-profit organizations that meet certain criteria that are spelled out in the RFA. If you meet any of these three criteria, you would be eligible to apply for these funds.

What is meant by SNAP-Ed Implementing agencies? Would this include 'local' agencies (health departments, food banks, etc.) and non-profits that conduct SNAP-Ed? Would this include state agencies?

Implementing agencies and organizations are those that receive funding directly from that state SNAP agency to implement or conduct the program. In most cases these are land-grant universities, state public health departments, and some non-profit organizations. An interactive map that lists implementing agencies by state can be found at: <http://snap.nal.usda.gov/state-contacts>. Please note, the implementing agency is not the state SNAP agency. It is the “sub-grantee” that has contracted with the state SNAP agency to conduct the program.

“Local” agencies and non-profit organizations (health departments, food banks, etc.) would be eligible to apply only if they are one of the state’s implementing agencies, e.g. only if they receive funds directly from the state SNAP agency to conduct the program. If they are a sub-grantee or a sub-contractor to an implementing agency, they would not be eligible to apply.

State SNAP agencies would not be eligible to apply unless they also implement (e.g. conduct) the program. In most states, the state SNAP agencies contract with other organizations and agencies to implement the program. If a state SNAP agency has contracted with another state agency to implement SNAP-Ed, that other state agency would be eligible to apply.

Can only land-grant universities apply for these grants? What about other universities?

1862 and 1890 land-grant universities are eligible to apply because they administer EFNEP. Other land-grant universities would be eligible to apply if they administer SNAP-Ed. Similarly, non-land-grant universities, and other entities would also be eligible to apply if they administer SNAP-Ed. Although only the designated eligible institutions/organization/agency can apply for each grant, the inclusion of other universities, organizations, and agencies that bring expertise, experience, and networking relationships can strengthen the application.

Can two or more organizations/agencies apply as co-chairs for a single grant?

NIFA will fund only one host site for each grant. However, organizations/agencies are welcome to work out co-chair leadership responsibilities among themselves to determine how to best share grant leadership and management responsibilities.

### **AFRI Childhood Obesity Prevention vs. RNECE Requirements**

For some parts of the RFA, there seems to be some inconsistency between the RNECE project and the AFRI childhood obesity prevention expectations. Are we required to follow all AFRI and all RNECE requirements?

Inclusion of the RNECE initiative into the AFRI umbrella of grants was not an exact fit. The RNECE component of the AFRI Childhood Obesity Prevention RFA has been written to distinguish where RNECE expectations may include some exceptions to the AFRI umbrella of grants. Where there are questions, the RNECE requirements are to be followed. As an example, for the Childhood Obesity Prevention RFA, the expectation is that the research should focus on overweight and obesity among children and adolescents, ages 2 – 19 years. However, for the RNECE projects, the expectation is to focus research on nutrition education and obesity prevention for audiences that would be eligible for EFNEP and/or SNAP-Ed. There is no age limitation.

Please explain what is meant by the agricultural functions of research, education and extension? How do these terms apply to the RNECE grants?

Research, [higher] education, and extension are integral to the land-grant university mission, and are required language for AFRI RFAs. By design, the RNECE initiative is expected to support program implementation research. Thus, for the RNECE grants, two of the three agricultural functions are met (research and extension). Some potential applicants may use different terminology to describe program/outreach efforts, but as long as their focus is on program implementation research – especially as applies to SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, they would meet the AFRI requirement.

### **NEW Standard Grants – Topic-Based Regional Center and Signature Project**

This seems an ambitious RFA – what is expected for the time allotted and resources available. It takes several years to conduct a community assessment, prepare and implement, and then evaluate a public health plan, especially where there are constrained resources. What exactly is NIFA expecting?

NIFA (and FNS) recognize that the RNECE Initiative is an ambitious endeavor. At the same time, we have a sense that there is already good work underway or that has been developed, along with expertise yet to be tapped. Potential applicants are encouraged to review the RFA and consider how, working with others, they can contribute to the RNECE body of evidence.

How many collaborators are expected? Is there a minimum number?

The RFA does not include a specific numerical expectation for collaboration. Rather it encourages inclusivity – thinking through what types of expertise might be important to accomplish what the proposal sets out to do, and what is possible with the resources available. Additionally, the “regional” language implies the need for involving broad participation. The previous RNECE grant required research, program, evaluation, and communication expertise. Those elements would continue to be important.

Is the topic-based Center expected to coordinate with EFNEP and SNAP-Ed agencies across the nation or just within the region within it is based?

Given that the topic-based center has no geographic constraints, EFNEP and SNAP-Ed organizations and agencies could be included from across the nation.

### **Supplemental Grants**

For the supplemental grants, does the proposal need to add new research or can we expand on what we already have?

It would be the grantees’ responsibility to determine how they will meet the new requirements – whether by building upon the research that is already underway or initiating something new.

### **Regional Restrictions**

Can we go outside our region when collaborating (for example multi-state AES)?

Assuming you are talking about the geographic regions, those are meant to be regional projects and to engage other states within the region as fully as possible. Expertise outside of the geographic region is also allowable, particularly as it supports and strengthens what the region has set-out to do.

What is meant by “region” for the new Regional Center? Does it include geographical boundaries?

The new regional center is to be a topic-based regional center. The region might be viewed as a “community” of expertise on the topic regardless of geographic location.

### **EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Expectations**

To be more competitive, should new research projects incorporate both SNAP-Ed and EFNEP? Similarly, do both have to be included in a new signature project?

The RNECE Initiative represents collaboration between FNS and NIFA with respect to SNAP-Ed and EFNEP at the federal level. Both programs should be incorporated for all projects.

### **Existing Projects**

Are there any programmatic priorities or channels of interest, or building on existing docs, such as the SNAP-Ed Toolkit?

See the RFA, pages 13 – 16, for specific details on leveraging and extending work that has already been done.

What are the current signature projects that Centers are working on so that we can complement or not duplicate efforts?

To learn about the signature projects that are underway, applicants are encouraged to contact the Regional Centers directly. A contact list, which aligns states with the respective centers has been developed. It can be found in the webinar slides, and on the NIFA RNECE program site – see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/program/regional-nutrition-education-and-obesity-prevention-centers-excellence-rnece>, and scroll to program specific resources.

### **eXtension Community of Practice (COP)**

An expectation to contribute to eXtension's COP is noted in several places within the RFA. Generally it says that projects can contribute to existing COPs or form a new COP; whereas pages 16 and 17 indicate that the Community Nutrition COP is to be used. Which guidelines should we follow?

For SNAP-Ed (and EFNEP) a COP has already been established. It is the Community Nutrition COP. Therefore, the RNECE projects should contribute to that body of work.

Is there a specific link for the Community Nutrition COP?

Yes. See the RFA, page 17. It is [http://extension.org/low\\_income\\_nutrition\\_education](http://extension.org/low_income_nutrition_education).

For the supplemental grants, do the current regional centers need to submit an additional letter of support from eXtension and the Community Nutrition COP or can we resubmit what we already have?

Applicants for all types of grants – both new and supplemental – will be required to submit new letters of support from eXtension and the Community Nutrition COP. Although the current grantees submitted these letters last year, the COP did not have a good understanding of what they could expect from the grantees. Going forward, it will be important that there is good understanding on both sides – the grantee and the COP – as to what expectations will be. Those expectations are to be worked out between the applicant and the COP. The purpose of the letters of support is to reflect that there is such understanding and agreement between the potential grantee and the COP.

### **Match Requirements**

Can you provide more details regarding the matching fund requirements? Will local teacher time qualify for matching funds?

There are no match requirements for the RNECE grants.

### **Miscellaneous**

Is there an expectation about advanced degree requirements for PIs or Co-PI, such as a PhD, DrPH?

No such requirement has been included in the RFA.

Can we apply for more than one-type of Childhood Obesity Prevention Grant – i.e. is there any restriction to applying for an RNECE grant and another type of AFRI Childhood Obesity Grant simultaneously?

Although there is not prohibition against applying for more than one grant, such action is not encouraged as it may result in weaker proposals. Applicants are encouraged to focus their efforts to submit the strongest proposals, possible.