

**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**

**UPDATED:** Please note, all RNECE RFA information can now be found on the NIFA RNECE webpage, <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/program/regional-nutrition-education-and-obesity-prevention-centers-excellence-rnece>. The AFRI RNECE RFA can be found under the title Fiscal Year 2015. RNECE specific content begins on page 11 – program area code A2151. The FY 2014 RNECE RFA can be found under related funding opportunities at the bottom of the page. Both RFAs have information important for completing an application. Also include on the RNECE webpage 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 4-21 to 4-29**

**More on Supplemental Awards**

Should supplemental applications be classed as “new” or “renewal” applications? Is a progress report required for renewal applications, as stated in the RFA?

These should be renewal applications. However, a progress report will not be needed as part of the RFA process. Rather, progress is expected to be reported through your quarterly reports, which you are already submitting through the national coordination center.

Is a separate management plan document required for the RNECE Supplement proposals? There is no request for it in the RFA, NIFA grants.gov instructions, or the 2015 RNECE FAQ, but apparently it is required for some AFRI grants.

No. A separate management plan is not required. It will be important to include the necessary rationale for what you are doing in the narrative, but not as a separate document.

## Questions from 4-8 to 4-20

### Signature Research Project

For the signature research projects, should the evaluation/comparison be done on new ways that the programs may be implemented going forward or on what is currently happening?

The intent of this project is to conduct a rigorous evaluation of program participation versus non-participation, according to the way that the programs are currently being conducted and program policy. Pre-/post-participation self-report data has been collected for EFNEP to assess behavior change since the program began. Similarly, many SNAP-Ed programs have collected such data since that program began. A more rigorous analysis, which also compares those who participate and those who do not, is needed to help us have greater confidence in the monitoring that is in place, identify more substantive changes that are occurring, and/or recognize where/how to strengthen program implementation and monitoring. If applicants wish to evaluate a new way of conducting the programs as a subset of the larger comparison analysis, that would be their choice.

How large in scope should the signature research project be – one program/both programs (e.g. SNAP-Ed and/or EFNEP); a small defined group, state, or multi-state data?

The RNECE initiative is intended to strengthen and inform both programs. Thus, both programs should be included.

Regarding the breadth of participation in the signature research project, the RFA does not stipulate that the project must be a multi-state project. That said, careful attention should be given to how the research design will reflect differences in program size and geographic location – small, mid-sized, and large programs, and including both urban and rural areas at high risk for obesity.

What data is currently collected within these programs?

For EFNEP, there is the WebNEERS data. See <http://nifa.usda.gov/tool/webneers> or contact your EFNEP Program Coordinator(s) in your state for more information about that data collection process. National impact reports and other data can be found at <http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/efnep-2014-national-reports>.

For SNAP-Ed, the Education and Administrative Reporting System (EARS) and annual reports are used. For more information, see <http://snap.nal.usda.gov/national-snap-ed/snap-ed-plan-guidance-and-templates>.

Can the signature research project be done independent of the regional centers' work? If not, are we expected to work within the geographic region of which we are a part, or can we work with another regional center where we have an established working relationship?

The RFA stipulates that the signature research project must be connected to an existing regional center. This could happen in a variety of ways. The regional center could apply for the competitive signature research project directly. Another eligible institution/organization/agency could apply for the signature research project and could secure a letter of cooperation and support from the regional center wherein it is located. Or the eligible institution/organization/agency could apply for the signature research project and secure a letter of cooperation and support from a regional center in a different part of the country based on working relationships that have already been established. If the latter option is used, the

applicant would be strongly encouraged to contact the regional center director for the region wherein he/she is located as a matter of common courtesy and to further the spirit of cooperation and collegiality that is fundamental to this initiative.

Is a letter of support needed from the eXtension Community Nutrition Community of Practice for this type of award, similar to the other awards that are part of this RFA?

Yes.

### Questions from 3-26 to 4-7

#### **Eligibility – Principle Investigators and Other Key Leadership for NEW Regional Center**

Are PIs, Co-PIs and Co-Directors from the 5 existing centers ineligible to compete for the new PSE Center? This is not stated, but I've heard that this is a policy decision. If they are ineligible, how may they participate with a prime applicant? May it be paid through the grant, or must it be donated from another source?

Although the FY 2015 RFA does not explicitly state that leadership from existing geographically-based regional centers are not eligible to apply for the new topically-based policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE) regional center, it is implied. Such centers have already built PSE elements into their FY 2104 grants. Additionally, separate funds have been set aside in the FY 2015 RFA for them to further develop their centers, according to the criteria given. PIs, Co-PIs, Directors, and other key leadership will be better served as they focus on the supplemental components of the FY 2015 RFA for which they, uniquely, are eligible.

The expectation to coordinate and cooperate across centers, and especially with the national coordination center continues in the FY 2015 RFA as was initially noted in the FY 2014 RFA. It will be the existing centers' responsibility and the new PSE center applicants' responsibility to determine how they will coordinate efforts. This will likely be an iterative process since the new center has not yet been determined.

#### **Eligibility – State University Systems**

Can a colleague from another university in our state university system which has considerable social science research expertise submit a proposal for the signature research project?

The RFA identifies three specific groups that are eligible to apply for RNECE funding – see below. A colleague from another university (or other organization) could serve as a Co-PI to a PI through a sub-award, as long as no more than 50% of award funds are transferred from the host university (or other organization) to the second university (or other organization).

#### **Research, Education, and Extension Terminology and Requirements for Integrated Grants**

Pertaining to eligibility for the new PSE Center, what does 'extension' mean, as listed on pages 36-37 of the RFA? It is not capitalized as a proper noun but seems to suggest land grant Extension programming. Does 'extension' mean institutions cited on the official lists of 1864's and 1890s, or are there different sub-categories of institutions? For example, in many cases the existing SNAP-Ed SIAs in land grant institutions are not Extensions, so can linkages with them be considered 'extension'. Must other, non-land grant universities, SNAP-Ed SIAs or other non-profit entities involve educational institutions from these official lists? Alternatively, for purposes of the new PSE Center, does 'extension' mean *extending* the impact or reach apply to the PSE Center of Excellence? Please explain more clearly.

Pages 36 and 37 mention research, education, and extension activities. This is standard terminology for AFRI grants. As noted in another FAQ, applicants for the RNECE grants may use

different terminology to describe program/outreach efforts. As long as their focus is on program implementation research – especially as applies to SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, those activities would be appropriate for consideration. Applications for the new PSE Regional Center will be stronger if they reflect understanding of and linkages with existing implementing agencies, including land-grant universities that implement SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, and other SNAP-Ed implementing agencies.

Notably, the PSE Regional Center is expected to benefit both SNAP-Ed and EFNEP. Since EFNEP is conducted through the Cooperative Extension System of 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions, linkages with these institutions will be important – just not at the exclusion of other organizations and agencies.

Item (C) on page 36 cites 'teaching initiatives' which suggest higher education. Does this 'teaching' requirement apply to the PSE Center for which non-academic entities are qualified to apply? If yes, how would scoring of an application be adjusted for non-academic applicants so as not to favor academic institutions and disadvantage any others whose PSE background is otherwise equivalent or possibly superior?

This question applies to the new "USDA Centers of Excellence." As noted in another FAQ and in the RNECE webinar that I gave on 9 and 10 March, the "USDA Centers of Excellence" criteria do not apply for the RNECE grants.

Since this is a part of the childhood obesity AFRI RFA and you have said that it needs to be presented as "integrated," does the budget have to be at least 1/3 each for extension and research?

No. As noted in the webinar, the AFRI and RNECE initiatives are not an exact fit. The "integrated" option is the best fit for RNECE within AFRI funding, since it supports program implementation research, i.e. a close program – research connection. Thus, by design, the "integrated" requirement is met. More specific AFRI requirements do not apply, as they may or may not be appropriate to the RNECE projects.

### **New Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (Topic-based) Regional Center**

If we have considerable PSE expertise within our organization, particularly with respect to SNAP-Ed, would that make us a strong applicant for the new topic-based regional center?

Such expertise is important. To further strengthen your proposal, it would be important to draw upon PSE experience and expertise more broadly since this Center is expected to be "regional" in nature. In other words, you might think of colleagues from other parts of the country and/or who have other PSE experience and expertise who may bring added value to what you are considering. Also, it's important to note that the PSE Regional Center will be expected to inform SNAP-Ed and EFNEP. These programs are distinct in their potential use of PSE interventions. Both programs should benefit from having this regional center.

The four 'opportunities' for the PSE Center listed on page 13 sound like a required scope of work, but hundreds of materials such as community assessment tools, guidance manuals, evaluations, and excellent websites have already been cited in the newly released 2016 *SNAP-Ed Guidance*. States are expected to build on these existing resources now, to apply what's best for their work, and to keep up with this rapidly changing environment. As described, the PSE Center sounds like it is being charged with creating a duplicative electronic site rather than coaching practitioners to navigate and apply the plethora of existing and rapidly changing resources. Is this what is expected? Is this mandatory to

receive points during scoring, or will other more innovative approaches be considered equivalent on a scoring tool?

As stated for item 7, on page 13, the requirement is to leverage and extend successful interventions through at least one of five ways. This is in accordance with the RNECE Initiative's three-fold purpose which is, in part, to strengthen the evidence-base on effective nutrition education/obesity prevention programs for diverse populations groups (.e.g. to identify and confirm what works). Although implementing agencies are already expected to utilize and build-upon evidence-based practices, there is some question as to how much and how well that is happening for PSE interventions. The new PSE Regional Center is expected to facilitate improved application of evidence-based PSE interventions through at least one of the five opportunities noted. Applications will be scored less favorably if this requirement is not met.

### **Supplemental Awards – Infrastructure and Augmentation**

Can the entire \$160,000 (FY 2015 supplemental funds) be focused into one or more of the 8 areas of augmentation listed in the RFA? For the National Coordination Center, can the entire \$160,000 be used to augment current and planned activities including the 3 areas in the RFA? Will there be additional support for the Center infrastructure during the 3rd year of research/activity? Or is it expected that the \$160,000 will support the Center infrastructure as well as augment our work? In other words, is it true that at this point there are no additional funds to support the RNECE infrastructure in year 3 besides the funds found in the most current supplemental funding stream?

The RFA does not stipulate that the funds must be used for a new and different project. Rather, it requires that the funds are to be used to augment current and planned activities. This way, the funds can be used to build upon what is currently being developed, while also giving more focus to areas of specific interest and need. If Project Directors choose to put the full amount towards augmenting one or more specific areas, that would be their choice.

Further, the RFA was not broken down to account for infrastructure. Applicants need to determine those costs in developing their total budget. At this time, funds are available as follows:

- RNECE funds received for years 1 (awarded) and 2 (continuation award subject to progress)
- AFRI-RNECE funds that must last through years 2 and 3 (subject to an approvable proposal)

These funds, available through the FY 2014 RNECE and FY 2015 AFRI-RNECE RFAs represent the total funds available to date. Whatever you receive is expected to support planned and augmented costs. No assurances of additional funding can be made at this time. That said, there is considerable interest in what will come from this initiative. FNS and NIFA are very interested in emerging project outcomes.

### **Supplemental Awards – Regional Involvement**

Is it accurate that the new supplemental awards from the 4 existing Regional Centers may include contracts for projects or work outside the region, provided it benefits the states within that region? We understand that the funds from the initial award are to be expended only within the region.

The intent of the RNECE RFA is, in part, to draw upon and strengthen regional expertise to address regional issues and challenges. The regional centers would be expected to draw first from within their region for expertise to address the needs identified in the region. If additional

expertise is needed, such expertise could be solicited on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate justification given.

### **eXtension Community of Practice**

What is the eXtension Community Nutrition Community of Practice web address? I googled it and the site appeared to be dated.

The correct address is [http://www.extension.org/low\\_income\\_nutrition\\_education](http://www.extension.org/low_income_nutrition_education). The most recent posting was a link to the FY 2016 SNAP-Ed Guidance that was announced last week. If you don't see the announcement about the new Guidance you may need to refresh your browser.

Item 6 on page 13-14 requires coordination with the eXtension Community Nutrition Education Community of Practice (CoP). For PSE Center applicants that are not part of the Extension system, does this not put them at a competitive disadvantage, even though their qualifications may be superior? How would this requirement be scored so as not to unfairly disadvantage others?

There is no disadvantage to applicants who are not part of the Cooperative Extension System, since requirements for coordinating with the eXtension Community Nutrition Education Community of Practice are the same for all eligible applicants.

Please note, the FY 2014 RNECE evaluation and scoring criteria for the proposals will be used rather than the FY 2015 AFRI-RNECE evaluation criteria, since the former criteria is a better fit for the intent of the RNECE initiative. See pages 33 and 34 of the FY 2014 RNECE RFA.

### **Match Requirements**

For the PSE Center, is any 'match' required? If yes, must it be in cash? If in-kind, must it be from non-Federal, non-USDA, or non-NIFA or non-FNS sources? Will 'match' be scored in the review of the application?

The match requirement applies only to the specific types AFRI grants noted in the RFA. It does not apply to the RNECE grants

### **Questions from 3-23 to 3-25**

#### **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.