

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (SNAP & EFNEP): Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence (RNECE)

MODIFICATION: Indirect cost rate language changed on page 30 (7/17/2014). Eligibility language changed on page 24. This change has been reflected throughout the RFA (7/22/2014). Priority consideration language changed on page 12 (7/22/2014).

FY 2014 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 15, 2014



**U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (SNAP & EFNEP): Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence (RNECE)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.200.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on August 15, 2014**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **SNAP & EFNEP: Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence RFA**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the **SNAP & EFNEP: Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence (RNECE)** for fiscal year (FY) **2014** to establish four Regional Centers of Excellence – one in each of NIFA's four administrative regions and to establish one National Coordination Center. This RFA is part of a combined effort by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and NIFA to build the evidence-base for nutrition education and obesity prevention strategies and interventions that produce measurable improvements in health, obesity, nutrition (food behavior), and physical activity-related outcomes of interest to USDA; and develop effective education/extension, environmental, systems, and policy translational activities that promote health and prevent/reduce obesity in disadvantaged low-income families and children. Through the creation of these research centers and national coordination center both agencies are addressing the goals and priorities of the Department, and their respective agencies and mission areas. The approximate amount available to support this program in FY 2014 is \$4,000,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for **RNECE** projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an RNECE grant.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

(7 U.S.C. 3318) The Secretary has general authority to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further the research, extension, or teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences of the Department of Agriculture.

Nutrition education and promotion programs for low income or disadvantaged groups have been a priority within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for nearly half a century. USDA administers several nutrition education programs through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-ED) is the primary educational program administered through FNS. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is the principal educational effort administered through NIFA.

EFNEP was initiated in 1969 and is administered and implemented by 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and six U.S. territories. For FY 2014, EFNEP is funded at \$67,934,000. SNAP-Ed was initiated in 1992, and is administered by participating state SNAP agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands. SNAP-Ed is delivered by nearly 100 implementing agencies, including land-grant universities in 47 states, public health departments, food banks, non-profit organizations, and others. For FY 2014, SNAP-Ed is funded at \$401,000,000.

Given their long-standing financial and organizational commitment to low-income nutrition education, NIFA, FNS, and land-grant universities have a strong interest in assuring that EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs are effective, innovative, replicable, sustainable, and cost effective in terms of meeting the needs and improving behaviors of their target population groups. USDA conducts several program monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, monitoring of behavior change among EFNEP participants has been in place since the program's inception. For SNAP-Ed, three national reports have been prepared by land-grant universities to assess program impact and two SNAP Education and Evaluation studies have been contracted by FNS to evaluate selected intervention projects (Wave I and Wave II Reports, respectively). However, additional research is needed to supplement these efforts – to demonstrate program effectiveness and identify changes that are needed to improve both programs. EFNEP and SNAP-Ed funds cannot support such research, as they are to be used for nutrition education programming with their respective target audiences.

This RFA addresses the Research, Education, and Economic (REE) Action Plan Goal 4: Nutrition and Childhood Obesity to “build the evidence base for food-based and physical activity strategies and develop effective education/extension translational activities to promote health and reduce malnutrition and obesity in children and high-risk populations.” This RFA aligns with the strategic action to “develop and extend approaches to prevent obesity and related diseases, including translational activities to promote behavior change related to healthy eating and physical activity.”

This RFA directly supports USDA's Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (<http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-strategic-plan-fy-2014-2018.pdf>), Goal 4. Ensure that All of America's Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals.

- Objective 4.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food
- Objective 4.2: Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors

B. Purpose and Priorities

The overarching goal of the SNAP and EFNEP: Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence Initiative is to improve the health of low-income Americans through multiple strategies, including complementary nutrition education and public health approaches. The RNECE program is expected to build the evidence-base for dietary (food-focused) and physical activity strategies, demonstrate or improve the effectiveness of complementary nutrition education and public health approaches, and support a culture of health (e.g., improved nutrition and physical activity behaviors; and reduced food insecurity, obesity, and chronic disease) among low-income populations. Research Centers are expected to consider nutrition education¹ from a socio-ecological framework, such as is found in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf> and the Community Nutrition Education (CNE) Logic Model

<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/fsne/logicmodeloverview.pdf>. Expectations and requirements for EFNEP are found on the NIFA website

(<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/pdf/program-policy.pdf>) and for SNAP-Ed interventions are established in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA).

Successful applicants to this research program will demonstrate the capacity and commitment necessary to construct, document, and report best practices for EFNEP and SNAP-Ed that can be shared across federal agencies, document evidence-based approaches for demonstrating outcomes, and report outcomes in a scientific yet plain language manner. The purpose (objectives) of the RNECE program is three-fold:

- Strengthen the evidence-base on effective nutrition education/obesity prevention programs for diverse population groups – i.e. identify and confirm what works;
- Evaluate the long-term effectiveness of nutrition education/obesity prevention interventions for disadvantaged and underserved populations and opportunities for new research; and

¹ Nutrition education is defined broadly as: “any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being. Nutrition education is delivered through multiple venues and involves activities at the individual, community, and policy levels.” This definition has been adopted by the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior and was authored by Dr. Isobel Contento, a leading authority in nutrition education. (Nutrition education: Linking research, theory and practice, Jones & Bartlett, 2007).

- Identify and create research collaborations and synergistic relationships among researchers and EFNEP/SNAP-Ed program directors, universities and other implementers, and state and federal agencies.

Regional Centers will be responsible for building synergistic relationships, garnering stakeholder input, and conducting research and environmental scans. Each Regional Center is expected to plan, develop, and administer at least one specific program that is targeted to meet an identified need in that region. Further, each Regional Center will administer and evaluate competitive sub-awards – using pre-established, center determined – and NIFA and FNS approved project award and project evaluation criteria. Findings from the Regional Center projects will be communicated to all EFNEP and SNAP-Ed implementing agencies, the scientific community and the general public.

A high level of coordination and cooperation across states, institutions, organizations, and agencies, and across EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs and research interests is expected for these program implementation research grants.

Although the focus of the RNECE research program is nutrition education and obesity prevention to improve health and nutrition in disadvantaged populations, and is specific to EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs, the work of the Regional Centers will likely inform other low-income nutrition education programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children WIC, and will benefit populations where nutrition, health, and financial resources are less constrained.

In FY 2014, NIFA is soliciting applications for the RNECE research program under the following areas:

- Four geographically-based Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence (RNECE) grants corresponding to NIFA’s four administrative regions: North Central, Northeastern, Southern, and Western (a state/territory listing by region is provided at the end of Part I, C.)
- One RNECE National Coordination Center grant.

Each Regional Center is expected to plan, develop, and administer at least one signature research program that is targeted to meet an identified need in that region and that corresponds with the RNECE program objectives. Each Regional Center will also administer and evaluate competitive sub-award contracts, such as innovation grants and professional development grants (e.g. grants that are intended to amplify the RNECE work), using pre-established, center-determined project award and project evaluation criteria. Findings from the Regional Center projects should be shared with the National Coordination Center and communicated to the scientific community and general public.

Each Regional Center is also charged with promoting and fostering program implementation research. Regional Centers will facilitate collaboration across states and disciplines and will serve as focal points for regional research networks, collaborative team building, and broad-based stakeholder participation. In addition to engaging with EFNEP and SNAP-Ed implementing agencies, **and similar programs**, and state and federal staff, Research Centers are

also to interact with community members in identifying needs and developing and testing interventions that are culturally attuned and fully responsive to the needs of the community – both program providers and participants. Desired outcomes are: increased coordination of nutrition education/obesity prevention implementation research, education, and other intervention efforts that underscore and improve the effectiveness and impacts of EFNEP and SNAP-Ed; and documentation of lessons learned, and resources developed which can be used to inform other nutrition education/obesity prevention efforts to improve nutritional health and food security, and reduce obesity and chronic disease among low-income populations.

Although each Regional Center will have its own focus, NIFA expects the Regional Centers to collaborate and cooperate across regions to ensure efficient use of resources and to take advantage of the unique strengths and priorities of each Regional Center. Regional Center directors are required to participate in annual national coordination meetings and to communicate with representatives from national and multi-state low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention research and extension committees, EFNEP and SNAP-Ed, and similar programs, government agencies, and other organizations that can help inform EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs to harmonize regional needs and activities into a comprehensive, nationally-coordinated program. The National Coordination Center will facilitate these communications.

Regional Centers are expected to participate in reviews conducted by the National Coordination Center and NIFA to assess their configuration, performance, and engagement with other programs. Regional Centers will be responsible for preparing documentation and materials for the review.

The National Coordination Center will coordinate communications among the Regional Centers, aggregate and disseminate research findings, and identify common themes and results across the four regions. The National Center is expected to develop national data to share with policy staff, decision-makers, and stakeholders and may examine different scales of programming to prepare and report on such data. Working with NIFA, the National Coordination Center is expected to organize and conduct the annual Regional Center directors meetings and the Regional Center reviews.

All applicants are required to submit a logic model as part of their application (See end of Part I C, Figures A, B, and C). The RNECE logic model (Figure A) will be used to guide the development of future funding priorities and to document the impact of investments in the RNECE research program. Grant applicants should develop and submit either a Regional Center logic model (Figure B) or National Coordination Center logic model (Figure C), including details for the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed projects (worth five points in the technical review). Grant applicants should also explain how their logic model supports the RNECE logic model (see Part IV., B., 3., c.).

All applicants are also expected to request funds for preparing documentation and materials for the review and for participating in the review and annual meeting in their budget request. Additionally they are required to ensure that all projects will fulfill the RNECE research program purpose, and to submit timely, complete, and accurate reports to the National Coordination Center and NIFA on fulfillment of program objectives.

C. Program Area Description

I. Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence

Program Area Priority Code – OP

Program Code Name – RNECE

Application Deadline – August 15, 2014

Proposed Budget Requests – Regional Center two-year budgets may not exceed \$856,250 total, including indirect costs, for two-year project period. The program anticipates making up to 4 new awards – one for each NIFA geographic region.

Requested Grant Type – Standard grants

Program Area Priority Contacts – Dr. Helen Chipman, (hchipman@nifa.usda.gov), and Dr. Dionne Toombs, (dtoombs@nifa.usda.gov)

Applications for the Regional Centers must address all of the following:

(1) Build partnerships and address challenges and opportunities. Each Regional Center will engage stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing regional research needs that correspond with the RNECE program priorities. Input should be sought from a variety of sources to ensure that a broad range of appropriate program implementation research needs is considered. Broad-based stakeholder advisory/steering committees should be established to provide the opportunity for research and programmatic experts, practitioners, participants, administrators, and others to identify and prioritize research needs, challenges, and opportunities in the region. Key informants may also include research and extension faculty, extension and public health program directors, multistate programmatic research and evaluation committees (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AnH0dFYGaiHSdFNubDhqWEc4ZjIwbHJmY3JLcG1DNUE&usp=sharing#gid=0>), agencies, foundations, and other organizations representing research, end-users, and public interest groups. Each Regional Center will also encourage greater adoption of evidence-based practices by working in partnership with government agencies, private sector organizations, research collaboratives, and academic institutions. NIFA strongly encourages interagency cooperation and shared funding of priority projects.

(2) Establish and maintain information networks. Each Regional Center will organize and maintain multi-state information networks to provide program managers, state agencies, and policy makers with information needed to make evidence-based decisions. The information networks will provide interactive dialogue and exchange of information among practitioners, researchers and extension specialists, government agencies, and other program stakeholders. The information networks must engage EFNEP and SNAP-Ed expertise operating at the national, regional, state, and local levels. Each Center should also work closely the RNECE National Coordination Center in actively contributing to the eXtension Community Nutrition Education Community of Practice, FNS SNAP-Ed Connection Website, and other NIFA and FNS websites, as appropriate. These will serve as information networks for delivery of information to specific user groups at a national level. Applicants must have a letter of acknowledgment from eXtension and a letter of support from the Community Nutrition Education Community of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>.

(3) Develop signature low-income nutrition education research programs and foster their sustainability. Each Regional Center will promote and foster sustainable collaboration across state and organizational boundaries to enhance the implementation of evidence-based practices, demonstrate program effectiveness, and improve program outcomes. Increased synergy across EFNEP and SNAP-Ed, **and similar programs**, is expected to result in improved nutrition and physical behaviors among both programs' target audiences.

Regional Centers will develop and make sustainable research programs that may inform and/or be applied by program practitioners in assessing and improving program impacts, especially by participants, environmental settings, and sectors of influence (see 2010 Dietary Guidelines pg. and CNE Logic Model, overview). Each Regional Center should provide support for key management tools that help foster such change. In some situations, the Regional Center may directly be involved by organizing workshops and training programs or by developing program implementation evaluation resources. In other situations, the role of the Regional Center will be to enable its partners to embrace the research by bringing together the necessary expertise and organizations, identifying resources, and communicating plans and successes to appropriate audiences.

(4) Review and evaluate impacts of low-income nutrition education program research and communicate successes. Each Regional Center will apply assessment and evaluation efforts to document the outcomes and impacts of its program implementation research throughout its region – including the aggregation and synthesis of existing information and the generation of new information. Each Regional Center will also communicate positive outcomes to key stakeholders, funding organizations, and policy makers.

(5) Work collaboratively with the RNECE National Coordination Center to provide required deliverables. Each Regional Center is responsible to ensure that all meaningful processes and products are appropriately disseminated, research is aggregated, and reports are generated that reflect the findings and implications in meeting overall program and regional objectives. Each Regional Center will work closely with the National Coordination Center awardee to ensure that regional findings are aggregated and incorporated into the broader RNECE program and in preparing for and participating in regional reviews. Timely, complete, and accurate reports are to be submitted to the National Coordination Center and to NIFA on fulfillment of program objectives.

(6) Manage funding resources effectively. Each Regional Center will establish processes for managing the RNECE funds awarded from NIFA and regionally determined sub-awards, and for facilitating the identification of appropriate regional priorities and projects for the RNECE funding. Sub-awards may be made for the signature program, innovations, and professional development grants (e.g. grants that amplify the RNECE work). The management processes must ensure that: a) the needs identification and prioritization process is kept separate from the funding process, b) eligible applicants are notified of funding opportunities, and c) funding is distributed in a fair and equitable fashion.

(7) Complete all other RNECE program requirements. Each Regional Center application should address all other requirements and expectations listed in Section IB, including, but not

limited to clearly describing a plan for achieving the three-fold RNECE program purpose, which is to:

- Strengthen the evidence-base on effective nutrition education/obesity prevention programs for diverse population groups – i.e. identify and confirm what works;
- Evaluate the long-term effectiveness of nutrition education/obesity prevention interventions for disadvantaged and underserved populations and opportunities for new research; and
- Identify and create research collaborations and synergistic relationships among researchers and EFNEP/SNAP-Ed **and similar** program directors, universities and other implementers, and state and federal agencies.

Additional details regarding Regional Center application requirements

Personnel

Regional Center applications must include the following personnel and should ensure multi-state/multi-institutional/organizational involvement:

- A high degree of diversity and cooperation across different types of implementing organizations, such as: land-grant institutions, insular area institutions, Hispanic serving institutions, state public health agencies, and/or other agencies/organizations that conduct EFNEP and/or SNAP-Ed.
- Evaluation Specialist
- Communication Specialist
- EFNEP representative
- SNAP-Ed representative
- Program and research experts
- Other personnel, as identified by the applicant – must have strong justification for inclusion

Signature Research Programs

Signature research programs will be developed according to input from stakeholders within the respective geographical regions and in conjunction with the RNECE program purpose. They are to be submitted to and approved by NIFA within 9 months of receiving the award. Grant applicants are to describe the process for determining the signature research program and to provide a timeline for implementation. Awardees are encouraged to submit proposed signature research programs to NIFA as early as possible to allow time for the signature programs to become well established during the grant period. These programs:

- May be unique to the regional area and/or specific cultures/populations.
- Must include EFNEP and SNAP-Ed interventions or be consistent with EFNEP and SNAP-Ed requirements; new interventions must align with EFNEP policy and SNAP-Ed Guidance (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/pdf/program-policy.pdf> for EFNEP and <http://snap.nal.usda.gov/national-snap-ed/snap-ed-plan-guidance-and-templates> for SNAP-Ed).
- For SNAP-Ed, must incorporate at least two of the following approaches:
 - Individual, or group-based education, health promotion, and intervention strategies;
 - Comprehensive, multi-level interventions as multiple complementary organizational and institutional levels; and

- Community and public health approaches to prevent obesity and improve nutrition.
- For EFNEP, must incorporate at least two levels of the social-ecological framework for change: individual, environmental settings, and/or sectors of influence (see Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010); and must include at least two of four core areas of the Community Nutrition Education (CNE) Logic Model:
 - Diet quality and physical activity (required) - Improved diets and nutritional and physical well-being through the adoption of federal food and physical activity recommendations. *Note: diet quality and physical activity are considered one core area;*
 - Food Security (optional) - Increased ability to get food directly—and from food assistance programs where necessary—to ensure having enough healthy food to eat;
 - Food Resource Management (optional) - Increased ability to buy, grow, or otherwise appropriately obtain, prepare, and store food that meets nutritional needs; and/or
 - Food Safety (optional) –Improved food safety and sanitation practices.
- Must show that processes are transferable – can be used by others.
- Must include an evaluation component – process and outcomes.

Sub-awards

Regional Center sub-awards should follow the same requirements as signature program grants, only on a smaller scale.

Priority Consideration

Applications should show the direct involvement of nutrition education/childhood obesity researchers. Additionally, NIFA will give priority consideration to Regional Center applications that:

- Expand and/or strengthen the evidence-base of effective nutrition education/obesity prevention programs for diverse low-income populations – addressing the question “what works”;
- Incorporate evaluation on mid- to long-term effectiveness of interventions;
- Create opportunities for new research on the effectiveness of nutrition education/obesity prevention programs – specifically EFNEP and SNAP-Ed through innovation and professional development projects;
- Foster new collaborations between individuals and institutions;
- Focus research on improving behaviors of the underserved or hard-to-reach audiences in “real-world” settings;
- Include small, mid-sized, and large EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs, 1862 land-grant institutions, 1890 land-grant institutions, 1994 land-grant institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, public health organizations, non-profit organizations, and/or other organizations that serve high-risk, underserved, and hard-to-reach audiences through EFNEP, **SNAP-Ed, and similar programs;**
- Successfully integrate research and education/extension/other intervention components with EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs into the proposed work;
- Successfully incorporate a social-ecological framework as described above; and

- Complement other EFNEP and SNAP-Ed evaluation projects.

2. Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence – National Coordination Center

Program Area Priority Code – OP

Program Code Name – RNECE

Application Deadline – August 15, 2014

Proposed Budget Requests – Budgets may not exceed \$175,000 total, including indirect costs, for two year project period. The program anticipates making 1 new award.

Requested Grant Type – Cooperative Agreement

Program Area Priority Contacts – Dr. Helen Chipman, (hchipman@nifa.usda.gov), and Dr. Dionne Toombs, (dtoombs@nifa.usda.gov)

Applications for the RNECE – National Coordination Center must address all of the following:

(1) Coordinate communications. Provide overall leadership for support and coordination of the Regional Centers. Frequent communication with regional project teams should include site visits, face-to-face meetings with regional teams, teleconferences, webinars, and/or other mechanisms for ensuring that teams are working collaboratively to achieve overall goals of the national program.

(2) Aggregate and disseminate research findings – including scales of programming. Work collaboratively with Regional Centers, web-managers, federal agencies, and others, as appropriate, to ensure broad dissemination of resources. Develop website content, as needed and appropriate.

(3) Develop national data for policy staff, decision-makers, and stakeholders. Work collaboratively with Regional Centers to ensure that all Regional Centers are actively evaluating and reporting on their programs. Identify common themes and results. Develop a mechanism for aggregating data and reporting national impacts. Provide NIFA with annual national impact reports and other documentation, as requested.

(4) Conduct a review of Regional Centers in conjunction with NIFA. Access configuration, performance, and engagement with other programs. Work collaboratively with Regional Centers to facilitate timing, content, documentation, and other materials for review. Applicants must indicate allocation of funds for the Regional Center reviews in their budgets.

(5) Serve as an information and communication liaison between and among NIFA, FNS, and the Regional Centers. Plan national meetings and work with NIFA in developing, coordinating, and conducting Regional Center reviews. Ensure timely posting of RNECE program content on eXtension Community Nutrition Education Community of Practice website, SNAP-Ed connections website, and other NIFA and FNS websites, as appropriate. This may be achieved directly, or working in conjunction with Regional Centers.

(6) Complete all other RNECE program requirements. Nutrition Coordination Center applications should address all other requirements and expectations listed in Part I, B, including, but not limited to clearly describing a plan for achieving the three-fold RNECE purpose, which is to:

- Strengthen the evidence-base on effective nutrition education/obesity prevention programs for diverse population groups – i.e. identify and confirm what works;
- Evaluate the long-term effectiveness of nutrition education/obesity prevention interventions for disadvantaged and underserved populations and opportunities for new research; and
- Identify and create research collaborations and synergistic relationships among researchers and EFNEP/SNAP-Ed program directors, universities and other implementers, and state and federal agencies.

Additional details regarding National Coordination Center application requirement

Applicants for the National Coordination Center award may be from any EFNEP and/or SNAP-Ed implementing organization/agency, **and similar programs**. Such applicants should reflect understanding and cooperation/coordination with organizations and programs represented by the Regional Centers. They should also demonstrate communications, technology, and evaluation expertise and capacity to meet the program requirements, including, but not limited to data aggregation, evaluation, and dissemination, and transferability, back-up, and security of data. Applications should also show the direct involvement of nutrition education/childhood obesity researchers.

***Cooperative Agreement and Interagency Agreement**

The National Coordination Center will work closely with NIFA through a Cooperative Agreement. NIFA's responsibilities will include administering the five competitive grants, providing guidance to project directors, participating in annual regional meetings, and commenting on project reports and other deliverables. NIFA will also work closely with the National Coordinator Center Director to facilitate regional program and research collaboration, broadly disseminate research findings, facilitate communication and implementation among the nutrition and public health communities, and co-lead regional reviews.

FNS and NIFA will co-fund the RNECE program through an interagency agreement. NIFA's responsibilities are as noted. FNS's responsibilities will include conferring with stakeholders, including nutrition and public health officials regarding scientific merits for the Requests for Applications (RFAs), participating in listening sessions with project directors, facilitating collaboration among partners, reviewing and commenting on reports, and facilitating research dissemination. Two individuals will be identified as a primary point of contact for NIFA and two for FNS for these research grants. Notably, these points of contact will be specifically for the RNECE research program. Ongoing customer service for EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programming will continue through existing communication processes.

Figure A. - Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence Program Logic Model

Situation: The overarching goal of the Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence program is to build the evidence for food-based dietary and physical activity strategies; and develop effective education/extension translational activities to promote health and reduce malnutrition and obesity in disadvantaged children and adults. The RNECE program advances the USDA’s strategic goal #4: Ensure that All of America’s Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals; and Objectives 4.1.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food; and 4.1.2 Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors by establishing and maintaining information networks, building partnerships and addressing nutrition education challenges and opportunities, developing signature programs and fostering their sustainability, evaluating program research and communicating success; communicating program outcomes to practitioners, decision-makers, and other key stakeholders, and managing funding resources effectively.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes – Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short term - Knowledge Change	Medium term - Action Change	Long term - Condition Change
Legislative authority Congressional funding USDA coordination NIFA intra-agency coordination Program directors Support staff Panel managers Review panel members Stakeholder matching and other contributions	Publish RFA Recruit panel managers and peer review panelists Conduct peer review panel meeting Award funds to meritorious applications Collaborative team-building through national and regional coordination meetings and activities Promote the development and implementation of RNECE by facilitating collaboration across states, disciplines and purposes Establish and maintain low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention program: research information networks Facilitate collaborative team building and broad-based stakeholder participation	Regional program: research stakeholders Land-grant partners Public health partners Non-profit organizations Research, teaching, and extension faculty Federal agencies State agencies University and other scientists Consumers General public Underserved individuals or communities eXtension CoPs Public interest groups	Generate new knowledge Adapt existing knowledge to new nutrition education situations Engage broadest possible scientific, extension, health, and other communities in challenges faced to improve nutrition and physical activity behaviors in low-income environments Produce web-based, other digital, and traditional media information that allows communication among the scientific community and among the research, teaching, extension and outreach communities, stakeholders, and consumers Provide original material for eXtension CoPs	Increased coordination of research, education, extension and outreach efforts Enhanced responsiveness to critical, priorities for improving nutrition and physical health behaviors among vulnerable populations New and more stakeholders applying evidenced-based practices New best-practices used in low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention programs Regional and national trans-disciplinary focus on improving programs through applying evidenced-based practices Networks that improves the flow of information among researchers, program implementers, key stakeholders and decision makers	Improved cost benefit analyses of low-income nutrition education Increased environmental supports that facilitate improved behaviors Adoption of sustainable evidence-based practices Improved nutrition and physical health condition among vulnerable populations Improved food security Innovation in fighting hunger through food security practices with vulnerable populations Increased synergy and collaboration among sectors of the population that contribute to feeding and educating low-income individual and families Abundant supply of safe, affordable and high-quality foods for consumers

Assumptions

Food and physical activity behaviors significantly impact health
 Evidenced-based research leads to improved nutrition education programs and thus personal behaviors and environmental supports
 Relatively short-term interventions can impact longer-term nutrition and physical behaviors
 A regional approach is key to strengthening national programs and improving local interventions

External Factors

Congressional funding
 Stakeholder input
 Emergence of new foods and technologies
 Escalating food costs
 Changing food and physical activity practices and environments

Figure B. Template for Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence Program Logic Model – REGIONAL CENTERS

Situation: The overarching goal of the Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence program is to build the evidence for food-based dietary and physical activity strategies; and develop effective education/extension translational activities to promote health and reduce malnutrition and obesity in disadvantaged children and adults. The RNECE program advances the USDA’s strategic goal #4: Ensure that All of America’s Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals; and Objectives 4.1.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food; and 4.1.2 Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors by establishing and maintaining information networks, building partnerships and addressing nutrition education challenges and opportunities, developing signature programs and fostering their sustainability, evaluating program research and communicating success; communicating program outcomes to practitioners, decision-makers, and other key stakeholders, and managing funding resources effectively.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes – Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short term - Knowledge Change	Medium term - Action Change	Long term - Condition Change
	Build partnerships and address challenges and opportunities Establish and maintain information networks Develop signature low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention research programs and foster their sustainability Review and evaluate impacts of low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention program research and communicate success Work collaboratively with the National Coordination Center Manage resources effectively				

Assumptions

External Factors

Food and physical activity behaviors significantly impact health
 Evidenced-based research leads to improved nutrition education programs and thus personal behaviors and environmental supports
 Relatively short-term interventions can impact longer-term nutrition and physical behaviors
 A regional approach is key to strengthening national programs and improving local interventions

Congressional funding
 Stakeholder input
 Emergence of new foods and technologies
 Escalating food costs
 Changing food and physical activity practices and environments

Figure C. Template for Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence Program Logic Model – NATIONAL COORDINATION CENTER

Situation: The overarching goal of the Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence program is to build the evidence for food-based dietary and physical activity strategies; and develop effective education/extension translational activities to promote health and reduce malnutrition and obesity in disadvantaged children and adults. The RNECE program advances the USDA’s strategic goal #4: Ensure that All of America’s Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals; and Objectives 4.1.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food; and 4.1.2 Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors by establishing and maintaining information networks, building partnerships and addressing nutrition education challenges and opportunities, developing signature programs and fostering their sustainability, evaluating program research and communicating success; communicating program outcomes to practitioners, decision-makers, and other key stakeholders, and managing funding resources effectively.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes – Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short term - Knowledge Change	Medium term - Action Change	Long term - Condition Change
	Coordinate communications Aggregate and disseminate research findings Develop national data for policy staff, decision-makers, and stakeholders Conduct review of Regional Centers with NIFA Serve as information and communication liaison between and among NIFA, FNS, and Regional Centers				

Assumptions

External Factors

Food and physical activity behaviors significantly impact health
Evidenced-based research leads to improved nutrition education programs and thus personal behaviors and environmental supports
Relatively short-term interventions can impact longer-term nutrition and physical behaviors
A regional approach is key to strengthening national programs and improving local interventions

Congressional funding
Stakeholder input
Emergence of new foods and technologies
Escalating food costs
Changing food and physical activity practices and environments

Additional Resources

The following websites may serve as useful resources in informing and developing an RNECE proposal:

1. USDA Strategic Plan (<http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-strategic-plan-fy-2014-2018.pdf>)
2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010, USDA and USHHS - especially note page 56 (<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf>)
3. Choose My Plate (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>)
4. Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Home Page (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/efnep.html>)
5. EFNEP Program Policy (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/pdf/program-policy.pdf>)
6. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Nutrition Education Home Page (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/nutrition-education/>)
7. FY 2015 SNAP-Education Plan Guidance (<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/national-snap-ed/snap-ed-plan-guidance-and-templates>)
8. Community Nutrition Education Logic Model, Revision 3, February 2014 (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/fsne/logicmodeloverview.pdf>)
9. Western Region's SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework: Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Outcomes, April 2014 (<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/snap/WesternRegionEvaluationFramework.pdf>)
10. Web-based Nutrition Education Evaluation and Reporting System (WebNEERS) (http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/web_neers.html)
11. EFNEP Impacts (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/impacts.html>)
12. National Information Management and Support System – Multistate research project NC2169 – EFNEP related research, program evaluation and outreach (http://nimss.umd.edu/lgu_v2/index.cfm)
13. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Through the Land-Grant University System for FY 2010: A Retrospective Review, January 2013 (http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/fsne/pdfs/lgu_final_rep_2012.pdf)
14. SNAP-Ed Strategies and Interventions: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for States – Evidence-based Policy and Environmental Change in Child Care, School, Community, and Family Settings, 24 July 2013 (<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/snap/SNAP-EdInterventionsToolkit.pdf>)
15. SNAP-Education and Evaluation Study (Wave I): Final Report, January 1, 2012 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap-education-and-evaluation-study-wave-i-final-report>)
16. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs Education and Evaluation Study (Wave II), December 5, 2013 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education-and-evaluation-study-wave-ii>)
17. Best Practices in Nutrition Education for Low-Income Audiences, 2014, (<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/snap/CSUBestPractices.pdf>)
18. Aligning and Elevating EFNEP and SNAP-Ed through the Land-Grant University System, April 2014 (http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/pdf/align_elevate_report.pdf)
19. Logic Model Planning Process: Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Programs (www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated_logic_model.html).

List of States and Territories by Region:

North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Northeastern: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Southern: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Virgin Islands.

Western: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Marianas, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2014 is approximately **\$4 million**. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Pending funds availability, NIFA intends to award a total of four Regional Nutrition Education Centers of Excellence (RNECE) at roughly \$856,250 each, and one National Coordination Center at \$175,000.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2014, all applications submitted to the **RNECE** program should be submitted as new applications. A new project application is one that has not been previously submitted to the **RNECE** Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

In FY 2014, applications, including the proposed budget, should be submitted for a two-year period, as NIFA anticipates making these awards as continuation grants to reduce the administrative burden to the grant applicants. A continuation grant is an award for which an application is approved, but each year of funding is awarded on an annual basis and is subject to the availability of annual appropriations and satisfactory progress of the project. Awards made in FY 2014 will provide funds for the first twelve months of the project. The statutory time limitation for awards issued under this authority is 5 years. No award may exceed this statutory time limitation.

Awards will be administered as roughly \$642,188 in first year and \$214,062 in second year for the Regional Center projects (\$856,250 total) and \$87,500 per year for two years for the National Coordination Center project (\$175,000 total).

Individual applicants must choose between project types – Regional Nutrition Centers or National Coordination Center. They may not apply for both types of applications.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, we consider education in RCR essential to the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 7 CFR Part 3022, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive

to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Per award terms and conditions, grant recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and to support the conduct of the training.

Note that the training referred to herein shall be either on-campus or off-campus training. The general content of the ethics training will, at a minimum, emphasize three key areas of research ethics: authorship and plagiarism, data and research integration, and reporting misconduct. Each institution will be responsible for developing its own training system, as schools will need flexibility to develop training tailored to their specific student needs. Grantees should consider the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program for RCR (<https://www.citiprogram.org/rcrpage.asp>). Typically this RCR education addresses the topics of: Data Acquisition and Management - collection, accuracy, security, access; Authorship and Publication; Peer Review; Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities; Collaboration; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and Use of Animals in Research.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by land-grant institutions that have EFNEP programs, SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies (<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/state-contacts>), and/or other non-profit organizations/agencies that have developed and/or delivered and/or evaluated similar low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention programs. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

Applications must include justification of eligibility to be considered for an award. Examples of eligibility would include: 1) being an 1862 or 1890 land-grant university, 2) having received SNAP-Ed funding from the state SNAP-Agency to implement SNAP-Ed in FY 2014; and/or 3) evidence that they are a non-profit organization/agency along with a description of the similar type of low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention program that they developed, delivered, and/or evaluated – including a program description, audience reached, action taken, and results achieved.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no requirement for cost sharing or matching funding.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-OP-004574** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on

the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

Grants.gov provides online tools to assist if you do not own PDF-generating software. You will find PDF conversion software at <http://test.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048

- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the **RNECE program**. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **20** pages of written text with 12 point font regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, including all figures, tables, and logic model. We have established this maximum of 20 pages to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative for both the Regional Centers and the National Coordination Center must include all of the following:

- (1) A description of the mission and goals of the Center;
- (2) A listing of the director and other key personnel (or positions), including organizational affiliation of the Center;
- (3) A description of the management process that the Center will use:
 - Regional Centers: to establish broad-based input and sustained involvement from a diversity of individuals, and institutions/organizations in identifying and prioritizing program implementation research needs and developing a strategic plans that will be followed to address regional priorities (once they are established) and RNECE objectives;
 - National Coordination Center: to establish cooperation, coordination, and aggregation of work by regional centers to reflect success in achieving the goals and objectives of the RNECE program;
- (4) A plan for fulfilling each of the respective Regional Centers or National Coordination Center requirements (See Part I.C. Program Area Descriptions and logic model templates). Include a logic model chart that indicates the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project (worth five points in technical review). Refer to the logic model in your evaluation plans, relevance statement, and elsewhere, as applicable;

(5) A commitment for working collaboratively with the National Coordination Center and other Regional Centers to ensure that data can be aggregated, reports can be generated, and products and processes can be shared to meet RNECE program objectives and regional objectives;

(6) A description of the process that will be used to ensure effective management of resources, including:

- Regional Centers – the approach used to ensure that a fair and open decision-making process is used to solicit and select potential applicants for funding opportunities;
- National Coordination Center – the approach used for appropriately and effectively gathering, aggregating, and disseminating regional results and products;

(7) A timeline and evaluation plan, including milestones, to assess progress and accomplishments throughout the project;

(8) A description of potential challenges that may be faced and how they will be addressed;

9) A description of expected accomplishments, implications; and potential next steps to further the achieve goals and objectives of this program; and

10) A description with supporting documentation that demonstrates capacity and transferable experience to succeed with this program.

c. Field 12. Other Attachments

Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No page limit. Title the attachment as ‘Collaborative Arrangements’ in the document header and save file as ‘CollaborativeArrangements’. If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, i.e., those who provide specialized expertise not available in the project team but who are not involved in project management, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the Guide includes information about the people who require a Senior/Key Person Profile, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support, including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. A budget and budget narrative must be included for each year and include a cumulative budget.

A two year budget must be submitted with each application. The initial project period of each new center award will be for 18 months, with subsequent funding for 6 months. This project period is intended to accommodate delays that often occur in the sub-award process. The project period should be considered as sub-grants proposals are being developed.

In an effort to alleviate the administrative burden and expedite the awards process, NIFA may agree to modify the requirements for the administration of the RNECE awards. NIFA and FNS must approve the process that will be used to solicit and evaluate proposals prior to the release of requests for applications or funds for sub-awards. When the sub-award process has been approved by NIFA, the grantee will no longer be required to submit proposals and budgets for sub-awards to NIFA and FNS for approval.

At least one member of each Regional Center team and National Coordination Center team must attend annual leadership meetings to report on RNECE activities. Reasonable travel expenses may be claimed as part of the project budget.

Additional Budget Information

NIFA intends to work with the National Coordination Center to conduct a review of the Regional Centers to assess each Center's configuration, performance, and engagement with other programs. Successful applicants are expected to participate in this review and prepare documentation and materials for the review.

For the purpose of budget development, applicants are required to request funds for reasonable costs for attending this review and preparing documentation and materials for the review. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the budget narrative section of the application.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter "RNECE") and the program code (i.e., enter "OP").
- b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

c. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **August 15, 2014 (5 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 5 business days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

2 CFR Part 220, Appendix A, G.8.a. – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions:

8. Limitation on reimbursement of administrative costs.

a. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection G.1.a of this Appendix, the administrative costs charged to sponsored agreements awarded or amended (including continuation and renewal awards) with effective dates beginning on or after the start of the institution's first fiscal year which begins on or after October 1, 1991, **shall be limited to 26% of modified total direct costs** (as defined in subsection G.2 of this Appendix) for the total of General Administration and General Expenses, Departmental Administration, Sponsored Projects Administration, and Student Administration and Services (including their allocable share of depreciation and/or use allowances, interest costs, operation and maintenance expenses, and fringe benefits costs, as provided by Sections F.5, F.6, F.7 and F.9 of this Appendix) and all other types of expenditures not listed specifically under one of the subcategories of facilities in Section F of this Appendix.

Full Negotiated Rate for non-educational institutions.

Not to exceed 10% of total direct cost of the cooperative agreement if the award is made to a nonprofit institution (including an educational institution).

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities. Funding may only be utilized for the priorities outlined in this RFA.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a 2-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a review panel will technically evaluate applications that meet these requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA (100 points):

1. Relevance of the proposal to the accomplishment of program goals and core objectives, as described in Part I, B. including the logic model (20 points total, of which 5 points for logic model is included);
2. Completeness and adequacy of the proposal response to items listed in the Project Narrative (Part IV, B.3.b.), including the configuration of the proposed Regional Center or National Coordination Center and its potential to engage with low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention stakeholders and low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention research and programs (20 points) e.g. reflecting tight connections between program implementation research, EFNEP and SNAP-Ed **and similar programs**, and across the social-ecological framework;
3. Potential of the proposal to accomplish program goals, core objectives, and program description requirements (Part 1 C) (25 points);
4. Quality and extent of stakeholder involvement in proposal development, and probability that stakeholders will actively participate and contribute to the success of the Regional Center program (substantiated by letters of support included in the “Collaborative Arrangements” portion of the application) (15 points);

5. Capacity of host institution(s) to provide support, including commitment to low-income nutrition education/obesity prevention research and programs (EFNEP and SNAP-Ed **and similar programs**) and history of regional, multi-state, or multi-institutional/multi-organizational engagement and leadership in EFNEP and SNAP-Ed **and similar programs** (5 points);
6. Experience, accomplishments and time commitments of key project personnel (5 points); and
7. Appropriateness of requested budget, including sub-award monitoring for accountability (10 points).

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 555, Reston, VA, 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process, to the extent permitted by law; therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to the ones listed below. Note that the list includes current documents however some of these documents may cease to exist and new ones put in place with the December 26, 2014 implementation of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

2 CFR Part 220—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225—Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230—Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016—USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3022—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs-- General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in federally-assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in federally-assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

44 U.S.C. § 3541 et seq. (Pub. L. 107-347) - Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), to improve computer and network security within the Federal Government. Applies to awardees if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information on behalf of NIFA.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

At least one member of each Regional Center team and the National Center team must attend annual leadership meetings to report on RNECE activities. Reasonable travel expenses may be claimed as part of the project budget. Regional Centers are to prepare and submit annual reports to the National Coordination Center, which will aggregate findings and prepare annual national reports for NIFA and FNS. The National Coordination Center will prepare other reports, where indicated, for stakeholders and decision-makers.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts –

Helen Chipman, PhD, RD

National Program Leader – Food and Nutrition Education

Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition – Division of Nutrition

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

800 9th Street, SW, Waterfront Center, Room 2336

Washington, DC 20024-2225

Telephone: 202-720-8067

Fax: 202-401-4888

E-mail: hchipman@nifa.usda.gov

Dionne Toombs

Division Director

Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition – Division of Nutrition

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

800 9th Street, SW, Waterfront Center, Room 2382

Washington, DC 20024-2225

Telephone: 202-401-2138

Fax: 202-401-6488

E-mail: dtoombs@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contact –

Duane Alphs

Team Leader

Awards Management Division

Office of Grants and Financial Management

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

800 9th Street, SW, Waterfront Center, Room 2152

Washington, DC 20024-2271

Telephone: 202-401-4326

E-mail: dalphs@nifa.usda.gov

Rochelle McCrea

Team Leader

Awards Management Division

Office of Grants and Financial Management

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

800 9th Street, SW, Waterfront Center, Room 2160

Washington, DC 20024-2271
Telephone: 202-401-2880
E-mail: rmmcrea@nifa.usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

We will send copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved goals or objectives prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests be approved for changes that are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel, prior to effecting such changes.

d. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not federal funds are involved, prior to instituting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. The terms and conditions of award include information about no-cost extensions of the award and when ADO's prior approval is necessary.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of

amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA 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. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.