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The Food and Nutrition Service Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Request for Grant Applications

Current State Agencies Only

Use this solicitation to apply if you are a State agency that operated the FNS Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program in FY 2002.



Letter of Intent Due Date: December 9, 2002

Grant Application Due Date: January 13, 2003

**FNS 728
0584-0512**

**Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Request for Grant Applications**

SUMMARY

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will be making grants to States, United States territories and federally recognized Indian tribal governments, as defined in this announcement. The grants must be used to provide coupons or equivalent benefits to low-income seniors that they may exchange for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. Eligible foods are fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. A total of \$15 million is available for grants for the 2003 farmers' market season, contingent on the availability of such funds. Additional funds may be made available prior to grant award or during the grant period.

NOTE: Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) funds will be used first to continue grants to State agencies that operated programs in fiscal year (FY) 2002 and that want to continue operations in FY 2003, at the level of funds that were actually expended by each State agency. Once these commitments have been met, FNS will evaluate proposals both from current State agencies that have expended 50 percent or more of their FY 2002 SFMNP award amount and are requesting additional funding above their FY 2002 expenditure levels, and from new State agencies, i.e., State agencies applying for a SFMNP grant in FY 2003 that did not receive a grant in FY 2002.

Use this solicitation to apply if you are a State agency that operated the SFMNP in FY 2002.

DATE: Applications must be received **on or before 5:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, January 13, 2003.**

ADDRESS: Applications must be sent to **Diane Kriviski, Grant Officer, FNS, USDA, Grants Management Division, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Contact **Diane Kriviski** at **(703) 305-2049**, or via e-mail at **Diane.Kriviski@fns.usda.gov**.

I. What is the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)?

Background

The SFMNP is a program established by Congress and administered by USDA's FNS. Under the program, FNS will make grants to States, United States Territories, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments, as defined in this announcement. The grants must be used to provide low-income seniors with coupons or equivalent benefits they may exchange for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs. Eligible foods, as defined in this announcement, are fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. The grant funds may be used only to support the costs of the foods that are provided under the program; no administrative funding is available for FY 2003.

Purpose

The purposes of the SFMNP are to (1) provide resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs to low-income seniors; (2) increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs; and (3) develop or aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs.

Authority

Funds are being made available for this program pursuant to Public Law 107-171, which authorizes \$15 million for the SFMNP.

II. Who is eligible for these grants?

Any State agency that received a SFMNP grant from FNS in FY 2002 is eligible to apply for a grant under this solicitation. State agencies that did not participate in the SFMNP in 2002, or participated in the pilot program in 2001 but did not participate in 2002 can apply for SFMNP grant funds under a separate solicitation.

Each State agency may submit only one application on behalf of all interested State agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations in that State. Indian tribal governments may apply directly or as part of a State application. You may make subgrants to other State agencies, Indian tribal governments, local governments, and non-profit organizations. Also, Indian tribal governments may make subgrants to local governments and non-profit organizations in the areas they serve. States, U.S. territories and Indian tribal governments that choose to subgrant all or part of the program funds are responsible for ensuring that the funds are spent in accordance with requirements for the SFMNP.

III. How much is available for the grants, and when must the funds be spent?

A total of \$15 million is available for the SFMNP grants in FY 2003, contingent on the availability of such funds. However, first priority for allocation of the available funds will go to State agencies that received grants in FY 2002 and wish to continue operating the SFMNP. Such State agencies will be provided FY 2003 funds based on FY 2002 grant expenditures reported to FNS. Once these funding levels, known as “base grants,” have been established, remaining FY 2003 funds will be awarded competitively to SFMNP State agencies requesting funding above their base grant levels and to new State agencies, i.e., State agencies applying for a SFMNP grant in FY 2003 that did not receive a grant in FY 2002. Grants to current State agencies for increases above base levels and grants to new State agencies will be awarded through the competitive process. FNS may adjust the amounts requested in the grant applications to ensure that grants are funded at appropriate levels. The submission of a grant application does not guarantee funding.

All program activities under the FY 2003 SFMNP grants must be completed by November 30, 2003. State agencies have 90 days to complete closeout activities and submit their final reports. These reports are due to FNS no later than March 1, 2004. Program activities that must be completed within the grant period include, but are not limited to, recipient certification, issuance of benefits, redemption of benefits by recipients, submission of all FY 2003 SFMNP checks, coupons, and/or invoices (in the case of CSA programs) by authorized farmers, farmers’ markets, and CSA programs, and payment of such checks, coupons, and invoices by the banks and/or the State agency.

IV. What are the reporting requirements for grantees?

All State agencies receiving FY 2003 SFMNP funds are required to submit two financial status reports (SF-269A, short form) and two progress reports. The first set of reports, due on August 31, 2003, should reflect all program activity through July 31, 2003. The final set of reports, due on March 1, 2004, should reflect all grant activity from August 1, 2003 through November 30, 2003. The progress reports must indicate the number of outlets authorized to receive coupons (i.e., farmers, farmers’ markets, roadside stands, and/or CSA programs) by category and the number of recipients who have been issued coupons. FNS is particularly interested in the operation of CSA programs and reserves the right to obtain additional information on CSA program benefits.

V. How do I submit a grant application?

Your grant application must be received by FNS on or before **January 13, 2003**. Applications will be accepted until **5:00 p.m.** (Eastern Standard Time) on this date. It is your responsibility to meet this deadline by delivering the application or by mailing it sufficiently in advance of the deadline to ensure its timely receipt. We strongly suggest you send your application by a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and you track its delivery to FNS. Late applications will not be considered in the competition. We will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received.

You must submit an original and two copies of your application. The original must bear the original signature of your authorized representative. The original must be ready for copying, i.e., single-sided, unstapled, unbound, and on 8 ½ “ by 11” paper. Your original

and copies must be on white paper. We reserve the right to reject any application containing a grant proposal over 15 pages in length, **including all required** attachments. **FNS will not accept applications sent by fax or e-mail.** Your application must be delivered or mailed to:

**Diane Kriviski, Grant Officer
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
Grants Management Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738
Alexandria, Virginia 22302**

Contact **Diane Kriviski** at **(703) 305-2049** or via e-mail at **Diane.Kriviski@fns.usda.gov** with any questions about the grant application. We will respond by telephone to questions seeking clarification, whether technical in nature or relating to the application procedures.

VI. What is the meaning of the terms used in this request for grant application?

The following definitions and conditions apply to this program:

Community supported agriculture program means a program under which a farmer grows food for a group of shareholders (or subscribers) who pledge to buy a portion of the farmer's crop that season.

Coupon means a check or other negotiable financial instrument by which benefits under the program are transferred to program recipients. Coupons must contain a date by which the recipient must use the coupon, a date by which the farmer must submit the coupon for payment, a unique and sequential serial number, a denomination, and an identifier for the redeeming farmer. The denominations of the coupons must be sufficiently small to ensure that the recipient can redeem coupons at or near their full value.

Eligible foods mean fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs for human consumption. Eligible foods may not be processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes. Only fresh, unprocessed fruits, vegetables, and herbs may be provided under this program. Dried fruits or vegetables, such as prunes (dried plums), raisins (dried grapes), sun-dried tomatoes, or dried chili peppers are not considered eligible foods. Potted fruit or vegetable plants, potted or dried herbs, wild rice, nuts of any kind (even raw), honey, maple syrup, cider, and molasses are also not allowed.

Farmer means an individual who sells produce at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. While there is no federally established minimum portion or percentage of the produce that must be grown by the farmer offering it for sale at one of these outlets, the definition of farmer does not include an individual who exclusively sells produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors.

Farmers' market means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers.

Federally recognized Indian tribal government means the same as the definition of that term found at 7 CFR 3017.3.

Locally grown means grown within the borders of the State that the project serves. If the applicant/grantee chooses, ***locally grown*** may also mean grown in areas of States

adjacent to the State your project serves, as long as these areas are part of the United States.

Nutrition Education means individual or group education sessions and the provision information and educational materials designed to improve health status, achieve positive change in dietary habits, and emphasize relationships between nutrition and health, all in keeping with the individual's personal, cultural, and socio-economic preferences.

Recipient means a person who meets the age and income eligibility limits of the project and to whom coupons have been issued.

Roadside stand means a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to consumers.

State means any of the 50 States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Northern Marianas Islands.

State agency means the organizational unit within the State or federally recognized Indian tribal government – agriculture, aging, or health department, or any other agency approved by the chief executive officer of the State – that has administrative responsibility for the SFMNP.

VII. What do I have to include in my grant application?

Your grant application must include a detailed description of any modifications you are proposing to your FY 2002 SFMNP proposal and/or operations. This description must include the way(s) that FY 2003 funds would be used, i.e., increased recipient benefit levels, increased number of recipients, increased service delivery areas, justification for the program change described in the plan, and how you expect to achieve such changes. At a minimum, your grant proposal must address the following information in sufficient detail to demonstrate your ability to meet the requirements of the program.

NOTE: If you are not modifying your current FNS approved SFMNP operations, and you are not requesting additional FY 2003 funds above your base grant, you may proceed to Section VIII.

If you are proposing to modify your SFMNP in any way, the information pertaining to your proposal must be organized as follows:

1. Proposed Program Modifications

Describe how your project will achieve the changes you have proposed. Include any modifications you are proposing related to:

- Administrative operations, i.e., changes in distribution, partners, certification procedures
- Period of operation
- Benefit level (increase or decrease) *
- Eligible outlets (authorized markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture programs)
- Recipients you expect to serve during the grant period

- Service area(s), i.e., statewide, or selected counties/municipalities (specify which ones)
- Any other proposed change

***NOTE:** As we move from the competitive grant process to establishing the SFMNP as a permanent nutrition assistance program administered by FNS, we are concerned about the wide range of benefit levels among grantees. FNS is interested in serving as many eligible recipients as possible with the limited funds available for this program. We encourage applicants to structure their benefit levels in a way that maximizes the number of low-income seniors that receive SFMNP benefits.

2. Funding Request

If applicable, indicate the amount of FY 2003 funds you are requesting for the expansion or modification of your program, over your base grant amount, and how you determined that amount. Applicants are reminded that they are liable for any costs incurred for the SFMNP over and above the amount awarded in this grant. FNS is under no obligation to provide additional funds in such a situation.

3. Administrative Capacity

Describe your administrative capacity to operate and administer the project changes you propose. Because administrative funding will not be provided under the FY 2003 SFMNP grant, describe how you and any participating organizations or partner agencies will cover the additional administrative costs of the modified/expanded program. Specific sources and amounts of all funding to cover administrative costs must be described in detail, including appropriations, budget allocations, cash, grants, and in-kind contributions.

VIII. What do I have to include in my application package?

The grant application must include the following items:

- If applicable, the grant proposal, which must include Items 1-3 as described in Section VII.
- Application for Federal Assistance, SF-424. This is a required standard form for all applications for Federal assistance.
- Budget information – Non-Construction Programs, SF-424A. Budget estimates show how all the grant money (base grant as well as any additional funding) will be spent. Approved FY 2003 grant funds must be obligated and expended in accordance with the amounts indicated on the Budget Information form, SF-424A, and must reflect any adjustments made in the grant approval notification.
- Assurances/Certifications. Applicants must provide the following forms:
 - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs, SF-424B;
 - Certification Regarding Disbarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions;
 - Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements – Alternative II; and
 - Certification Regarding Lobbying.

NOTE: Only applications requesting additional FY 2003 funds above the base grant will be rated and ranked using the following evaluation criteria. FNS must approve any modifications to current SFMNP operations that do not require an increase above the base grant.

IX. How will my application be evaluated?

Panel Review

All grant applications that meet the deadline for submission will be screened for completeness and conformity to the requirements of this request for grant applications. A panel of FNS staff will determine the technical merit of each grant application and provide a numerical score.

Evaluation Criteria

Presentation (10 Total Points)

The grant proposal is well presented, well organized, complete, clear, and succinct. The proposal is relatively brief, and includes page numbers and a table of contents. The maximum acceptable proposal length is 15 pages, including attachments.

Organization and Staffing (15 Points)

The proposal clearly describes how the State agency plans to staff its proposed program changes, including a delineation of the agency/ies, office(s), and individual(s) who will be responsible for implementing the changes. A project activity chart depicting interagency collaboration for the new activities is also provided. Letters of commitment from the State agency's new partners should identify their roles and responsibilities, and document any resources that are being made available to the project. Such letters are provided as attachments to the proposal. Letters of support for the project that do not contain commitments of time, staff, or funding, may be included if space permits.

Soundness of Change in Program Operations (40 Total Points)

30 points: A clear description of all proposed changes to current SFMNP operations is provided. As appropriate and applicable, the application specifically identifies how many more recipients will be served, along with where and how the additional recipients will be identified and certified; what the new benefit level will be, and why that level is being changed from the previous year; and/or what new areas of the State, county, or municipality will be served in FY 2003 if additional funds are awarded. The application provides a brief justification or rationale for the proposed changes to your FY 2002 operations.

10 points: The application includes a description of the State agency's ability to support any proposed growth in the SFMNP, in terms of administrative oversight capacity, funding support, etc.

Budget Appropriateness and Efficiency (25 Total Points)

15 points: The proposed budget is adequate to support the project modifications. Both Federal and non-Federal resources are provided. Only food costs will be covered by SFMNP grant funds.

5 points: The source(s) and amount(s) of all funds and inkind contributions to be used to cover administrative expenses is/are clearly identified.

5 points: The Federal amount requested is correctly calculated (the projected recipients multiplied by the total benefit amount per recipient equals the total federal amount requested).

Past Performance (10 points)

5 points: Pertinent aspects of previous program operation and performance such as the accuracy and timely submission of required reports or use of appropriate draw-down procedures are described and documented. The grant officer will supply additional information, as needed, on previous program operations.

5 points: The State agency has expended at least 80 percent of its FY 2002 SFMNP grant funds.

X. What are the terms and conditions of the grant?

In addition to the requirements described above, applicants must agree to comply with USDA regulations and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars listed below. Copies of these documents are available online or from FNS upon request.

- 7 CFR Part 3015: “Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations”;
- 7 CFR Part 3016: “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments” (Reference OMB Circular A-102 Common Rule);
- 7 CFR Part 3017: Subparts A-E “Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)”;
- 7 CFR Part 3017: Subpart F “Government-wide Requirements for Drug-free Workplace (Grants); and,
- 7 CFR Part 3018: “New Restrictions on Lobbying”.

IX. Grant Awards

As noted above, there are two separate grant solicitations for SFMNP funds. For both solicitations, the respective panels will evaluate and score the grant applications. The applications will be ranked by score, starting with the highest score, and the panels will present their recommendations to the selecting officials. In making the final decision, the selecting officials will consider the recommendations from both solicitations’ technical review panels. The selecting officials may also take into account other USDA priorities, such as past performance on FNS grants, geographic, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, agency priorities, etc., in addition to the recommendations made by the technical review panel. If the selecting officials determine that some or all of the applications lack technical merit, the Agency may decide to award no grants, or less than

the total amount of funds set aside for this purpose. FNS reserves the right to fund successful applications at an amount less than requested if it is judged that the application can be implemented at a lower funding level, or if Federal funding is not sufficient to fund all successful applications fully. FNS also reserves the right to deny an otherwise worthwhile application if the success of the application is dependent upon an amount of funding that is not available.

We expect to complete the review no later than February 2003. FNS will notify applicants of their FY 2003 SFMNP awards by March 2003. FNS will provide the FY 2003 funds by revising your current agreement to reflect the additional FY 2003 funds and the new end date of November 2003. The FY 2003 funds will be made available in your current Letter of Credit. If you have remaining FY 2002 funds, FNS reserves the right to offset your total FY 2003 SFMNP award with this remaining FY 2002 balance. If this is done, you must use your FY 2002 funds first in the continuation of your SFMNP operations. FNS will provide funding for approved grant applications upon receipt of a properly executed revised grant agreement and subject to available funding.