



United States
Department of
Agriculture

July 29, 2013

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

Dear State Directors:

The Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has amended the FY 2013 Direct Certification Improvement Grant Request for Applications (RFA) to allow four additional opportunities for State agencies to apply for Direct Certification Improvement Grants in FY 2014. The grants are available to State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to fund the costs of improving their direct certification rates with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other needs-based assistance programs, as allowed under Federal statute and regulations.

Section 749(h) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-80) provided \$22 million that the FNS must issue as grants to State agencies that administer the NSLP and have the lowest rates of children directly certified for free meals, for the purpose of improving those rates. Over \$14 million of this appropriation was awarded in grants in previous years. In December 2012, FNS announced a new Direct Certification Improvement Grant Request for Applications (RFA) to make available to States the remaining funds to be used for direct certification improvements. The final application deadline under the RFA was July 1, 2013. However, close to \$7 million in funding remains available and FNS now is amending the RFA to add additional application opportunities through July 1, 2014.

Purpose of Funding

The purpose of the Direct Certification Improvement Grants described under the amended RFA is to fund State agency activities in planning and implementing direct certification improvement projects that will help them reach and maintain the direct certification rate benchmark mandated by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010—effective with school year 2013-2014 and ongoing, to directly certify at least 95 percent of students in families receiving SNAP benefits each school year. Ultimately, FNS intends for the grants to assist States in improving access, increasing accuracy, and reducing paperwork in the NSLP and SBP by simplifying the certification process for free school meals.

Types of Grants Offered

FNS offers two types of Direct Certification Improvement Grants:

1. **Tier 1: Limited-Scope Planning and Implementation Grants** may be awarded for up to **\$150,000** under a simplified application process to fund planning and short-term implementation projects of limited scope. Please note that funding is limited to no more than \$75,000 for planning activities. Tier 1 grants will be awarded for periods of up to one year.

2. **Tier 2: Full-Scope Implementation Grants** may be awarded for up to **\$1,000,000** to fund direct certification implementation projects of significant scope, for periods of one to three years.

Under the amended RFA, States will have four new opportunities to apply for Tier 1 or Tier 2 grants in fiscal year 2014: ***October 1, 2013; January 2, 2014; April 1, 2014; and July 1, 2014*** (if funds remain available).

Who Can Apply

This RFA is extended to all State NSLP agencies; however, a State agency may apply for **only one grant during the RFA extension period**—either one Tier 1 application or one Tier 2 application, but not both. The following restrictions apply:

- States that applied for a **Tier 1** grant in the original RFA period (February 1 through July 1, 2013) may apply for a second Tier 1 or a Tier 2 award during the extended RFA period (October 1, 2013 through July 1, 2014).
- States that applied for a **Tier 2** grant in the original RFA period (February 1 through July 1, 2013) may not receive a second Tier 2 award, but may apply for a Tier 1 award under the extended period.
- No more than one application will be accepted from any State agency in any single fiscal year, and no more than two grants—two Tier 1 grants, or one Tier 1 and one Tier 2—will be awarded to any State agency over all the application periods of this RFA combined (February 1, 2013 through July 1, 2014).

Grant awards will not be competitive as long as sufficient funding is available to fund all fully responsive applications with potential to significantly improve direct certification performance. If sufficient funding is not available to award grants to all applicants, FNS reserves the right to give preference to applications from States with the lowest direct certification rates with SNAP, as reported in the latest Direct Certification Report to Congress published on the FNS public website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/Ora/menu/Published/CNP/cnp.htm>. Preference also may be given based on the amount of grant funding already awarded previously to applicant agencies for direct certification improvement purposes under previous RFAs.

Application Process (Electronic Submission)

To apply for this funding opportunity, applicants may download the grant application forms (SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL) from the Grants.gov website at www.grants.gov. Also, these required application forms and the RFA, with appendices, may be downloaded from the FNS grants website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/grants.htm>. Applications must be submitted electronically through the www.grants.gov website **by 11:59 pm eastern time** on the applicable application date deadline in order to be considered for that round of selections.

Materials and Information

The attached “Request for Applications for Direct Certification Improvement Grants” provides detailed information about this grant opportunity and the application process. All revisions in the attachments are in red for your convenience, the RFA and Microsoft Word versions of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 grant application templates (Appendices C and D) are available both on the Child Nutrition Division’s PartnerWeb community at <https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov>, and the FNS grants website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/grants.htm>.

If you have questions regarding the extension of this grant opportunity, please contact Grant Officer Carla Garcia via email at Carla.Garcia@fns.usda.gov. We look forward to receiving your applications for funding.

Sincerely,



Lael J. Lubing
Director
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division



Cynthia Long
Director
Child Nutrition Division

Enclosures