

Request for Proposal (RFP) Award entitled *Evaluation of the “Team Up for School Nutrition Success Pilot Initiative.*

Colleagues,

Here is an RFP related to evaluation of a school nutrition pilot program. **Deadline: Dec. 15**

Greetings,

The **National Food Service Management Institute, Applied Research Division** (NFSMI, ARD) is pleased to announce a new Request for Proposal (RFP) Award entitled *Evaluation of the “Team Up for School Nutrition Success Pilot Initiative.”*

The award amount for this project is \$74,000.00. The **deadline for proposal submissions is December 15, 2014**. The activity period for this project is January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015.

University faculty and researchers with education/credentials in nutrition and dietetics, hospitality management, public health and/or related fields; an interest in child nutrition program management; and experience conducting qualitative, quantitative, and evaluation research are encouraged to apply.

Please share this announcement with qualified faculty and researchers at your university, college, and/or school that you think might be interested.

The **Applied Research Division** is located at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. This project is being funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the NFSMI at The University of Mississippi.

Applicants must submit all information as detailed in the RFP on or before Monday, December 15, 2014. The Request for Proposal [follows below]. You may also access the RFP on the NFSMI web site at: <http://www.nfsmi.org/DocumentDownload.aspx?id=4244>

If you have any questions, please contact Keith Rushing via email at keith.rushing@USM.edu or Mary Frances Nettles via email at Mary.Nettles@USM.edu, or by phone at 800-321-3054.

Keith Rushing, PhD, RD
Research Scientist
NFSMI, Applied Research Division

Mary Frances Nettles, PhD, RD
Director
NFSMI, Applied Research Division

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Announcement Title: Evaluation of the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* pilot initiative; a three, six, and twelve month follow-up.

Funding Agency: This project is being funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI). The National Food Service Management Institute, **Applied Research Division (NFSMI, ARD)** is responsible for coordinating this RFP. NFSMI, ARD is located at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. NFSMI, ARD supports the NFSMI mission by systematically conducting research and development projects that influence child nutrition operational practices by increasing knowledge, providing research based resources, and determining best practices for issues impacting the operation and improvement of Child Nutrition Programs. NFSMI, ARD's primary research threads include: operational accountability, customer service, best practices, human resources, wellness, and equipment purchasing and facility design.

Key Words: financial management; Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA); healthy school environment; meal component; meal pattern; menu planning; National School Lunch Program (NSLP); nutrition standards; participation; plate waste; reimbursable-meal; School Breakfast Program (SBP); school food authority (SFA); school lunch; school nutrition programs; Smart Snacks; special needs;

Announcement Number: NFSMI-ARD-RFP: 0005-2013

Release Date: November 10, 2014

Award Amount: One project will be funded up to a maximum of \$74,017.00

Deadline for Proposal Submissions: December 15, 2014

Award Notification Date: on or about January 19, 2015

Project Activity Period: January 2015 – December 2015

Background Brief: The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, which was initially passed in 2010, created new meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards for schools participating in the National School Lunch program (NSLP) and School Breakfast program (SBP). The act requires most schools to:

- § increase the availability of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, fat free milk, and low fat milk in school meals;
- § reduce or limit the calories, sodium, saturated fat, and Trans fat, and sugar of all foods sold at school including foods sold at meals, competitive foods and beverages, vending items, and foods sold for fundraising at school during school hours; and
- § restrict the type, content, and/or quantity of beverages sold at school based on the grade level of students at the school. (USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2012).

Anecdotal data suggests that the increased stringency of the new regulations has created challenges for some school food authorities including:

- § reduced participation;
- § reduced ability to meet budget constraints due to increased cost of foods and decreased food sales;
- § inability to meet meal pattern requirements due to limited access/availability of required foods; and
- § lack of adequate/appropriate equipment to store, process, and/or prepare foods associated with the new requirements.

To address these challenges, The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) will pilot the *Team Up For School Nutrition Success* initiative in the USDA, FNS Southeast Region. As part of the initiative, approximately 50 SFAs will participate in a two-day training workshop tailored to address the individual needs of their SFA. NFSMI e-mailed State agencies in the Southeast Region and asked them to identify five to six SFAs from their states that may need support to meet any of the new meal pattern requirements. Additionally, State agencies were asked to identify three to four SFAs that are doing well in meeting the requirements of the new regulations. The selected SFAs completed the *Team Up For School Nutrition Success* assessment form to help identify the topic areas for the workshop. The four topic areas that are the focus of the workshop are menu planning, plate waste, increasing participation, and financial management. During the workshop, SFAs will develop action plans related to the specific needs of their program. Following the workshop, webinars will be conducted to support SFAs in implementing their action plans. As part of this initiative, NFSMI, ARD will award a grant to a university affiliated researcher to evaluate the progress/effectiveness of this program at three intervals following the workshop: 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month.

In *Evaluating Training Programs* Kirkpatrick (2005) discussed the concept of evaluating training programs utilizing four sequential levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Reaction was defined as how training participants react to the training program at the end of the training program. Learning was defined as the changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals who participated in the training. Behavior was defined as changes in participant behavior as a result of attending the training. Results were defined as the final outcomes that occurred as a consequence of participants attending the training, such as increased sales or profitability of the business represented by training participants. Kirkpatrick explained that each level is important and provides valuable information.

The action plans developed by participants at the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* workshop and three of Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation will be used as the framework for this project. The first or reaction level evaluation occurs at the end of the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* workshop. The other three levels (learning, behavior, and results) will be assessed at three time periods, three, six, and twelve months following the workshop. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies such as structured phone interviews, observations, and review of documents will be used to gather this information

Background Brief References:

Kirkpatrick, J. (2005). *Evaluating Training Programs*. (3rd Ed.) San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2014). *School Meals, Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act*. Retrieved from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

Goal & Objectives: The goal of this study is to evaluate the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* pilot initiative for strengthening the child nutrition programs of participating school food

authorities at three, six, and twelve months using the levels of evaluation developed by Kirkpatrick (2005).

The specific research objective is to evaluate the application of the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* pilot initiative on meeting the objectives of individual school food authority action plans established during the workshop in a) improving healthy school environments of participating school food authorities, b) improving financial stability of participating school food authorities; c) improving student meal program participation of participating school food authorities; and d) increasing operational effectiveness with regards to the four targeted areas of the workshop.

Project Requirements / Constraints: (Methodology, Budget, Quarterly Reports, Deliverables, and Site Visits by NFSMI, ARD Project Coordinator, and Timeline)

Methodology: The award recipient will utilize a combination of qualitative (e.g., qualitative observation, case studies, structured interviews, focus groups, and/or expert panels) and quantitative data collection (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, and/or quantitative observation) methodologies to meet the research objectives. As a minimum requirement of the data collection process, the award recipient must make at least one site visit to a participating school district in each state in the Southeast USDA region.

Budget: \$74,017 (indirect costs, or F&A, are limited to a maximum of 29%). Project costs will include the cost of qualitative and quantitative data collection, data analysis and reporting the findings.

Deliverables: the deliverables for this project include three quarterly reports and a technical report submitted in three drafts. The requirements for each of these are described in detail below.

Quarterly reports: The award recipient will submit quarterly progress reports via email to the NFSMI, ARD Project Coordinator at the end of the following quarters (until the project is complete):

- o January 2015 – March 2015
- o April 2015 - June 2015
- o July 2015 - September 2015

Each quarterly report will be reported on a form provided by NFSMI, ARD to include the following information:

- o Activities planned for this quarter
- o Activities / milestones / deliverables completed for this quarter
- o Deviations from proposed plan for this quarter
- o Difficulties encountered and solutions developed during this quarter
- o Major activities planned for the next quarter
- o A summary brief describing the results of data collected during this quarter

Technical report (drafts): On or before September 7, 2015, the award recipient will submit a preliminary draft of the technical report, including a completed literature review, the methodology-to-date, and the results-to-date. Upon completion of the research project, the award

recipient will submit a technical report of the research project and all supporting documents and data files created during the course of the project for review to the NFSMI, ARD project coordinator. The final technical report, which will be revised by the award recipient based on the NFSMI, ARD project coordinator review comments, will be submitted to the NFSMI, ARD project coordinator on or before December 31, 2015. The final technical report will be formatted utilizing a NFSMI, ARD template (to be given to the award recipient after acceptance of the award) and include the following components:

- o Table of Contents
- o Executive summary
- o Introduction
- o Methodology
- o Results and Discussion
- o Conclusions and Recommendations

The award recipient will also participate in the production of manuscripts and poster sessions related to this project. It is the intent of this funding that the NFSMI, ARD project coordinator be involved in the development and preparation of all publications related to this project. All deliverables must be submitted to NFSMI, ARD prior to an award recipient using the data from the project for an undergraduate or graduate thesis or a doctoral dissertation.

Site visits by NFSMI, ARD Project Coordinator: The NFSMI, ARD project coordinator will conduct two site visits to data collection locations. The purpose of these site visits is observe the implementation of the research, determine if the agreed upon methodology is being followed, and monitor the progress of the project based on the award recipient's project timeline.

Eligibility Requirements:

Only faculty or researchers employed at a Higher Education Institution (Public/State Controlled Institutions of Higher Education and Private Institutions of Higher Education) in the United States may apply.

RFP Contacts:

Keith Rushing keith.rushing@USM.edu or
Mary Frances Nettles Mary.Nettles@USM.edu
800-321-3054

Syd Conner

J. Syd Conner
Information Specialist
Office of Research Administration
The University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive #5157
Hattiesburg, MS 39406
Syd.Conner@usm.edu • Bond Hall, 313
601.266.4119 • FAX: 601.266.4312
www.usm.edu/research/office-research-administration