

Request for Applications for Competitive Grant Awards to Conduct Economic Research on the Joint Contributions of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Unemployment Insurance to the Nation's Social Safety Net

Fiscal 2010

Description and Application Process



Economic Research That Informs Food and Nutrition Assistance Policy



***Food Assistance & Nutrition
Research Program***

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service, Food Economics Division
Food and Nutrition Assistance Research Program**

**Request for Applications for Competitive Grant
Awards to Conduct Economic Research on the Joint
Contributions of the Supplemental Nutrition
Assistance Program and Unemployment Insurance to
the Nation's Social Safety Net**

SUMMARY: The Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) of the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) announces the availability of funds and a request for applications to conduct research on operational issues about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamp Program or FSP) and its support for the working poor. In particular, ERS seeks research that addresses: (a) operational issues regarding SNAP participation decisions and the dynamics of program participation among low-income households with workers; and (b) the interactions between receipt of SNAP benefits and State Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, especially during the current recession.

Ensuring SNAP participation among eligible households is a key SNAP management concern. Furthermore, prior research has shown that, as a group, eligible households with earners participate in SNAP at lower-than-average rates, and this behavior may carry over into periods of unemployment. Available national survey data are generally inadequate for timely analysis of SNAP use among those made jobless by the recession.

ERS believes the shortcomings of available national data can be addressed through creative use of administrative files. Linking program administrative data from SNAP and UI programs offers the research advantages of large sample size, considerable detail on inter-temporal use patterns, and support for analyses sensitive to State policy context and the character and impact of local (i.e. sub-state) economic developments. Such analyses can provide information that will enable increased program efficiency by identifying factors affecting households' decisions to apply for SNAP benefits relative to other available resources, as well as the interplay and sequencing of government support and labor market decisions.

Given the absence of a national longitudinal administrative database covering SNAP/FSP participants, this work must be carried out with data held at the State level. ERS seeks proposals from State and academic research organizations with access to SNAP/FSP, UI, and possibly other program records for the development of appropriate databases and subsequent analyses of the impact of the current recession on SNAP take-up and use, both alone and in concert with other benefits, most notably UI.

There are no matching funds requirements for research funded under this announcement.

Applicants may submit proposals for analysis of data obtained from one or more States. ERS anticipates awarding one or more grants under this solicitation, although it reserves the right to make no awards depending on availability of funds and the technical quality and feasibility of proposed projects.

CLOSING DATE: The closing date for submitting applications under this announcement is **Wednesday, February 17, 2010.**

INTENT TO SUBMIT: Please email David Smallwood at DSmallwd@ers.usda.gov by Wednesday, January 13, 2010 to inform ERS of your intent to submit an application. Include the name of your organization. Providing a notice of intent to submit is not a requirement for submitting an application, nor does it impose a requirement that an application be submitted. A notice of intent to submit will help ERS in the planning for the review process.

ANNOUNCEMENT: The posted notice through www.grants.gov is the only official program announcement. Any corrections to this announcement will be published on the www.grants.gov website. The applicant bears sole responsibility to assure that the copy downloaded and/or printed from any other source is up-to-date, accurate and complete.

ADDRESSES: Electronic applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov and will not be accepted if e-mailed. Hard copy (paper) applications should be mailed to:

*David Smallwood
Director, Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program
Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1800 M Street, NW, Suite N-2130
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-694-5466
E-mail: DSmallwd@ers.usda.gov*

Administrative and technical questions should be directed to David Smallwood (contact information above). You will receive an e-mail message by Monday, February 22, 2010, confirming receipt of your hard copy application and reporting its status in the review process. If you do not receive such confirmation, please contact David Smallwood at the mail, e-mail, or telephone number provided above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This awards announcement consists of four parts:

- Part I: Background — Legislative Authority, Eligible Applicants, Program History and Purpose, Available Funds in FY-2010, Matching Requirements, and Project and Budget Period;
- Part II: Responsibilities of the Awardee(s) and the Federal Government;
- Part III: The Review Process — Intergovernmental Review, Initial Screening, and Competitive Review and Evaluation Criteria;

- Part IV: The Application Process — General Information, Submission Requirements, Format and Contents of Proposals, Application Submission, Disposition of Applications, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number, and Checklist of a Complete Application.

Part I. Background

A. Legislative Authority

The authority for this procurement is contained in 7 U.S.C. 292, 411, 427, 1441a, 1621-1627, 1704, 1761-68, 2201, 2202, 3103, 3291, 3311, 3504; 22 U.S.C. 3101; 42 U.S.C. 1891-93; 44 U.S.C. 3501-11; 50 U.S.C. 2061 et seq, 2251 et seq. Under this authority, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture may award competitive grants for the support of research projects designed to inform and improve management of USDA food and nutrition assistance programs, especially the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Nutrition Programs (School Breakfast, National School Lunch, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food Programs), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

B. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for this announcement are restricted to: (a) State research agencies; and (b) public or private academic research institutions.

D-U-N-S Requirement

All applicants must have a D&B Data Universal Numbering System (D-U-N-S) number. On June 27, 2003, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published in the *Federal Register* a new Federal policy applicable to all Federal grant applicants. The policy requires Federal grant applicants to provide a D-U-N-S number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003. A D-U-N-S number is required for every application for a new award or renewal/continuation of an award, including applications or plans under formula, entitlement, and block grant programs, submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Please ensure that your organization has a D-U-N-S number. You may acquire a D-U-N-S number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free D-U-N-S number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or you may request a number on-line at <http://www.dnb.com>.

C. Program History and Purpose

The U.S. economy has been in recession since December 2007. The magnitude of the downturn is unprecedented for the post-World-War II era. By October 2009, the national unemployment rate had reached 10.2 percent and was expected by most analysts to go higher. In October, the ratio of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) to all unemployed was 35.6 percent, the highest proportion since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began systematic reporting of such figures in 1948. The effect has been felt broadly across States with some labor market areas

experiencing catastrophic job loss as major employers have moved or succumbed to the collapse in demand.

The hardship for families has been partially ameliorated by automatic stabilizers and direct action of the federal government. The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC08) program began in July of 2008 and has been amended by subsequent legislation, most notably the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) both to extend and increase benefits to jobless workers covered by the UI system. By fall Congress was considering further UI extensions, in some instances targeted on States with exceptionally high unemployment rates. On November 6, 2009, the President signed new legislation further extending EUC08 entitlement for most workers at risk of exhausting their rights to regular and/or emergency UI benefits.

SNAP benefits have played a significant role in responding to the recession. Between December 2007 and August 2009, the number of households receiving SNAP/Food Stamp benefits increased by 34 percent; total persons in households receiving these benefits went up by 32 percent. The ARRA provided federal funds for increasing benefits, extending emergency benefits, expanding coverage, and paying for administration. ARRA raised the maximum SNAP allotment by 13.6 percent beginning in April 2009, with those households qualifying for smaller benefit amounts receiving a larger percentage increase than households receiving larger benefit amounts. ARRA also eased eligibility restrictions for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS) in States with extended unemployment benefits. It is likely that, for many families, the combination of UI and SNAP benefits is proving essential to income support and food security in the face of recession-related hardship. To be sure, UI benefits are limited to workers covered by the program, and less than half of all unemployed persons receive UI payments. Even for covered workers payments eligibility varies by State. Nevertheless, the program is playing an important role in counter-recession stimulus. The rapid change in both SNAP and UI receipt stands in stark contrast to support provided by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, where caseload growth has been much slower.

At least until the recession took away jobs, individuals and families who have received both UI and SNAP in the recent past have been part of the working low-income households that are an important SNAP target. Program managers know very little about these households or the way in which program benefits interact. Were households receiving SNAP/FSP benefits before the UI spell commenced? If not, at what point did they begin receiving SNAP/FSP? What happens to SNAP/FSP benefits when UI benefits are exhausted? Some of these questions can be investigated with survey data such as provided by the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). But data from these resources are often long in coming and lack the temporal resolution for detailed study of benefit interaction. Moreover, the sample sizes are typically too small to support study of the consequences of variation in State policies or the highly localized events that are responsible for major worker dislocation.

In light of ERS experience in other projects and with encouragement from the Office of Management and Budget and for reasons cited in the introduction, ERS is particularly interested in the use of State administrative data for investigating these issues. Accordingly, ERS seeks proposals from State research organizations and academic research institutions with access to UI, SNAP/FSP, and possibly other program records for analysis and comparison of the impacts of

the current and previous recessions on SNAP take-up and use, both alone and in concert with UI and, where possible, other benefits. The following items indicate *some* of the research questions in which ERS is interested; applicants should provide a more in-depth discussion of the research questions they plan to address and their proposed analyses.

- (a) Components of SNAP caseload change. What is the role of SNAP household accessions and terminations (entrances and exits) on SNAP caseload change? How have these components changed over time and by stage of the business cycle?
- (b) Connection to the Unemployment Insurance System. What proportion of earners in SNAP households are in employment covered by unemployment insurance? What proportion of all SNAP households has members who were in past employment covered by UI?
- (c) Interaction between UI and SNAP/FSP benefit spells and duration. What alignment in time is there between individual/ household member receipt of UI benefits and SNAP? For instance, how much overlap occurs in receipt of benefits? How long do households receive UI benefits before receiving SNAP benefits?"
- (d) The marginal participant. What are the characteristics of persons and households newly added to the SNAP caseload? Has this composition changed from pre-recession through recession-to-date months?
- (e) Interstate variation in SNAP take-up. How do the answers to questions (a) – (d) differ by State?
- (f) Intrastate variation in recession effects. How, if at all, do the answers to (a) – (d) change when focus shifts to substate areas heavily affected by economic dislocation?

It is possible that these questions can be addressed with resources unique to individual States. UI program characteristics vary by State, however, and ERS seeks evidence of replicability of research methods that could be provided by application of a similar research method to more than one State. To this end and for purposes of management, ERS would welcome unified applications from consortia of individuals and/or institutions that promise integrated cross-state approaches to the questions cited above.

D. Available Funds in FY-2010

ERS anticipates having a total of approximately \$500,000 available to support database development and analyses in up to 5 States. Nothing in this announcement restricts the ability of ERS to make no award or award(s) of a lesser or greater amount.

E. Matching Requirements

The competitive grant awards in this announcement require no matching funds.

F. Project and Budget Period

The award(s) pursuant to this announcement will be made on or about April 14, 2010. The resulting grant is expected to be for 12 months.

Part II. Responsibilities of the Awardee(s) and the Federal Government

A. Awardee Responsibilities

1. Within forty-five (45) days of award and prior to completion of the project's final work plan, the Grantee shall meet with relevant federal personnel, other Grantees, and invited experts at ERS headquarters in Washington, D.C., to discuss the preliminary methodology and design of the research project. As part of this process, the Grantees will take part in a joint discussion of their proposed study designs and research questions, and receive technical assistance from ERS staff. This will allow for knowledge sharing across the various projects, as well as encourage peer-to-peer contacts among each of the Grantees if multiple grants are awarded.
2. No later than thirty (30) days after the above meeting, the Grantee shall submit a brief memo describing all changes to the work plan based on issues raised at the meeting and other discussions.
3. The Grantee shall assemble program data from their proposed States' SNAP/FSP and UI programs, as well as any other programs specified in their proposal, and create the necessary analysis files. After preliminary analyses have been conducted, a second meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., to discuss preliminary findings and a common format for the final report.
4. After completing the analysis, the Grantee shall prepare a final report describing the results of the study, including the procedures and methodology used to conduct the analysis, the research questions answered, the knowledge and information gained from the project, and any barriers encountered in completing the project. A draft of this report shall be delivered to the Federal Project Officer no later than thirty (30) days before the completion of the project. After receiving comments on the draft report from the Federal Project Officer, the Grantee shall deliver a final report in a mutually agreed upon electronic format to the ERS project leader before the completion of the project.
5. In accordance with OMB Circular 110A as codified in 2CFR215 (see: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/omb/circulars/a110/2cfr215-0.pdf> page 57) and to the extent allowable under administrative data sharing agreements, the Grantee shall make the analysis files available to the research community. ERS prefers that this result in a public-use data file. In preparing the public-use data file, data shall be edited as appropriate to ensure confidentiality and privacy of individuals. If the applicant believes that provision of a public-use data file is impossible, the application should explain why and should fully articulate how the applicant will make the data available to qualified researchers and to ERS.

In either case, the plan for data dissemination will be evaluated and scored during the evaluation of proposals.

6. The Grantee shall submit quarterly progress reports describing: (a) activities on the project; (b) difficulties encountered in developing the planned database(s) or in completing planned analyses and report writing; and (c) recommendations for addressing identified difficulties.
7. The Grantee shall submit invoices quarterly.

B. ERS Responsibilities

1. ERS will convene two meetings of Grantees, federal personnel, and relevant experts in the areas the Grantees choose to address. The first meeting will allow for technical assistance and peer-to-peer contacts before final research design decisions have been made, and it will assure that data constructs meet some standard of validity. A second meeting may be held approximately eight to ten months into the grant period to allow Grantees to meet, discuss, and assess their progress to date, and to receive assistance with any problems that have arisen.
2. ERS will provide consultation and technical assistance in the planning and operation of grant activities.
3. ERS will assist in information exchange and the dissemination of reports to appropriate Federal, State, and local entities.
4. ERS will review all project deliverables.

Part III. The Review Process

A. Intergovernmental Review

State Single Point of Contact (Executive Order 12372). ERS has determined that this program is not subject to Executive Order No. 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applicants are not required to seek intergovernmental review of their applications within the constraints of Executive Order 12372.

B. Initial Screening

Each application submitted under this announcement will undergo a pre-review to determine that: (1) the application was received by the closing date and submitted in accordance with the instructions in this announcement; and (2) the applicant is eligible for funding (see Part I, Section B). Applications that do not meet these pre-review items will not be reviewed further and will be ineligible for funding.

C. Competitive Review and Evaluation Criteria

Applications that meet the initial screening requirements will be evaluated and rated by a technical review panel. Panel members will use the evaluation criteria listed below to score each application. The evaluation criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project and to determine the probability of its success. The evaluation criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application. These review results will be the primary element used by ERS in making funding decisions, followed by proposed costs relative to available resources.

Selection of the successful applicant will be based on the technical and financial criteria laid out in this announcement. Reviewers will determine the strengths and weaknesses of each application in terms of the evaluation criteria listed below, provide comments and assign numerical scores out of a possible 100 points. A summary of all applicant scores and strengths/weaknesses and recommendations will be prepared and submitted to the ERS for award decisions. The point value following each criterion heading indicates the maximum numerical relative weight that each criterion will be given in the review process. An unacceptable rating on any individual criterion may render the entire application unacceptable. Consequently, applicants should take care to ensure that all criteria are fully addressed in the applications. Please be sure to refer to Part IV, Section B, Submission Requirements, and Section C, Format and Contents of Proposals.

Evaluation Criteria

The peer review panel will use the following criteria and weights to evaluate proposals (100 points total):

1. Goals, Objectives, and Potential Usefulness of the Analyses (30 points)

This criterion will assess the potential usefulness of the proposed research questions and how the anticipated results of the proposed project will advance policy knowledge and development in the area of concern cited in this RFA. If the proposed project builds on previous work, the application should explain how. Applications will be judged on the quality and policy relevance of the proposed research questions, study populations, multi-state extension, and planned analyses (including subgroup analyses).

2. Quality and Soundness of Methodology and Design (30 points)

This criterion considers the appropriateness, soundness, and cost-effectiveness of the methodology, including the research design, selection of existing data sets, data gathering procedures, statistical techniques, and analytical strategies. Richness of policy relevant data will be an important scoring factor in this criterion, as will be evidence of understanding of variation in UI laws across States encompassed by the study and the consequences of such variation for analysis. Analysis of linked administrative data is a critical scoring element. Thus, the proposal's discussion of the methods used to clean, standardize, and link the individual level or case-level data from different sources will be important. Applicants should thoroughly discuss how they intend to match case records from different data sources, what internal validity checks

will ensure the accuracy of the matches, and the content and architecture of the resulting data set. Other design considerations include whether the applicant has already obtained authorization to obtain and use the data to be linked from State or local agencies, and how confidentiality of the records and information will be ensured. Applicants must be able to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of information included in the project. The extent to which the application demonstrates a familiarity with the difficulties and potential biases of this approach, and plans to avoid or resolve them, will also be a scoring factor. Reviewers also will evaluate the proposed data analysis, including the proposed tabulations and table shells, model specifications (if any), the planned organization of the final report, and the proposal's discussion of how different data sources will be integrated to enhance the proposed analyses.

3. Qualifications of Personnel and Organizational Capability. (20 points)

This criterion addresses the qualifications of the project personnel for conducting the proposed research as evidenced by professional training and experience, and the capacity of the organization to provide the infrastructure and support necessary for the project. Panel members will evaluate the principal investigator(s) and staff on research experience and demonstrated research skills. Evaluation of consortia proposals will consider evidence of successful collaboration in the past as well as commitment by all consortia members to the current effort. Proposals that involve linking of administrative data and assembling of large databases will be scored on the applicant's or subcontractor's experience with such linking efforts. If the applicant plans to contract for any of the work and the contractors have not been retained, reviewers will consider the process by which they will be selected. Reviewers may consider references for work completed on prior research projects. Principal investigator and staff time commitments also will be a factor in the evaluation. Reviewers will rate the applicant's pledge and ability to work in collaboration with other scholars or organizations in search of similar goals. Reviewers also will evaluate the applicant's demonstrated capacity to work with a range of government agencies.

4. Prospects for Successful Execution (20 points)

Reviewers will examine if the work plan and budget are reasonable and sufficient to ensure timely implementation and completion of the study and whether the application demonstrates an adequate level of understanding by the applicant or applying consortium of the practical problems of conducting such a project. Adherence to the work plan is necessary in order to produce results in the time frame desired; demonstration of an applicant's ability to meet the schedule will therefore be an important part of this criterion. Reviewers will also examine the use of any additional funding and the role that funds provided under this announcement will play in the overall project. The proposal should also discuss in detail how resulting data will be made available to qualified researchers and to ERS. As noted above, ERS prefers that the data be edited as appropriate for confidentiality and issued as a public use data file. If the applicant believes that provision of a public-use file would be impossible, the application should explain why and should fully articulate how the applicant will make the data available to qualified researchers and to ERS.

Part IV. The Application Process

A. General Information

This part contains information on the preparation of an application for submission under this announcement and the forms necessary for submission. Potential applicants should read this part carefully in conjunction with the information provided in Part II. Applicants should reflect, in the program narrative section of the application, the manner in which they will be able to fulfill the responsibilities and requirements described in the announcement. Applications which do not address all the major tasks discussed in the Awardee Responsibilities in Part II will not be considered for award.

These guidelines are provided to assist you in preparing an application. In order to be considered for an award under this program announcement, an application must be submitted in the manner prescribed by ERS. Application materials including forms and instructions are available for download through www.grants.gov or by contacting David Smallwood Deputy Director for Food Assistance Research, Economic Research Service, 1800 M Street, NW, Room N2130, Washington, DC 20036, telephone 202-694-5466, or e-mail: DSmallwd@ers.usda.gov

A checklist is provided at the end of this section to help you provide the necessary information for completing a proposal. An Application for Federal Domestic Assistance Form (SF-424) and a budget form (SF-424A) are required for the proposal.

B. Submission Requirements

The purpose of the competitive grant proposal is to persuade ERS and members of the technical review committee that the proposed program is worthy of support under the criteria listed in Part III, Section C. The application should be self-contained, should clearly present the merits of the proposed research, and should be written with care and thoroughness. It is important that all essential information for comprehensive evaluation be included. Omissions often result in processing delays and may jeopardize funding opportunities.

C. Format and Contents of Proposals

For electronic submissions through Grants.gov, the proposal and all attachments must be submitted in portable document format (pdf). Using pdf allows applicants to preserve the formatting of their documents. In order to save a document as a pdf, the applicant will need to use pdf generator software. Grants.gov has published the following web page on tools and software that the applicant can use: www.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp

1. The Standard Application for Funding Cover Page (SF-424)

Each copy of the proposal must contain an Application for Federal Domestic Assistance-Short Organizational (SF-424). At least one copy of the form must contain electronic signatures when submitting via Grants.gov.

Complete all fields highlighted in yellow using the instructions provided on the form. **DO NOT provide your Social Security Numbers in fields 7 and 8.**

2. Standard Budget Form-Short Organizational (SF-424A)

A summary budget is required detailing requested support for the overall program. Funds may be requested under any of the budget categories listed, provided that the item or service requested is identified as necessary for successful conduct of the program, allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute or regulation.

Budget items include:

- Personnel
- Fringe benefits
- Travel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Other direct costs
- Indirect charges

Specific Instructions for SF-424A		
Item	Descriptor	Instruction
1(a)	Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "FANRP"
1(b)	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.253"
1(c), (d), (f)		Leave blank
1(e), 1(g)		Enter total amount of Federal funds requested
2-4		Leave blank
5(c), (d), (f)		Leave blank
5(e), (g)		Enter amount of Federal funds requested
6 a-k (columns 1 and 5)		Allocate Federal funds requested to appropriate budget categories
7-20		Leave blank
21-23		Optional



3. *Project Summary Page*

The proposal must contain a Project Summary Page. The names and institutions of the Principal Investigator, co-investigators, and subcontractors should be listed on the summary page, as well as email and phone contact information for the Principal Investigator. Also include the total amount of funding requested and the project's start and end dates. The Project Summary is limited to 250 words. The summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language comprehensible by persons in disciplines relating to the food assistance, unemployment insurance and administrative data research. The project summary should be a self-contained, specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on:

- Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; and
- Plans to accomplish project goal(s).

The importance of a concise, informative project summary cannot be overemphasized.

4. *Table of Contents*

A Table of Contents should be placed immediately after the Project Summary Page. This table should direct the reader to the pages for all sections of the proposal, beginning with the Project Description.

5. *Goals and objectives of the project*

An overview that describes (1) the project; (2) the specific research questions to be investigated; (3) proposed accomplishments; and (4) knowledge and information to be gained from the project by the applicant, the government, and the research community. If the proposal builds on any current project, the application should describe how funding under this announcement will enhance, not substitute for, current State or local efforts.

6. *Methodology and design*

Provide a description and justification of how the proposed research project will be implemented, including methodologies, chosen approach, definition of study populations, data sources, and a research plan. The proposed research plan should:

- (a) Describe in detail how the applicant plans to define the study population and subpopulations;
- (b) Identify how the proposed data sets and variables will be used by the Grantee to answer each of the research questions described in the proposal;
- (c) Identify important issues for which data currently are not available, and strategies for dealing with this lack of data when it pertains to the research questions in the proposal;
- (d) Describe in detail the methodology the applicant will use to extract analysis files of SNAP and UI participants. Grant applicants are encouraged to use a full population sample, but at a

minimum, a successful applicant will use a scientifically acceptable probability sampling method in which every sampling unit in the population has a known, non-zero chance to be included in the sample and a sample size large enough to make statistically reliable comparisons between planned subgroups. In your plans for linking administrative data, describe the criteria for the selection of existing data sets, as well as the methods used to clean, standardize and link the case-level data from the different sources. Applicants should discuss thoroughly how they intend to match case records from different data sources, and the internal validity checks that will be used to ensure the accuracy of the matches. The architecture for the resulting data set should also be discussed in detail.

- (e) Identify the methodology the Grantee will use to analyze the data and organize the final report. Complex data analysis is neither expected nor preferred. Simple tabular analysis and descriptive statistics are appropriate. The description should include subgroup analyses planned, report organization and proposed tabulations, including table shells illustrating how the results will be presented. The application should explain how different data sources will be synthesized to enhance the proposed analyses. To the extent that the analysis uses data on individuals from multiple, separate sources, such as administrative databases from several State agencies, the proposal should discuss measures taken to maintain confidentiality, as well as demonstrate that the Grantee has obtained authorized access to those data sources. The preferred form of proof is a signed interagency agreement with each of the relevant agencies/departments. Though not preferable, letters of support from the appropriate agencies are acceptable, provided that the letter clearly states that the proposing agency has the authorization to access and link all necessary data.

Grant applicants must assure that the collected data will only be used for management and research purposes, and that all identifying information will be kept completely confidential, and should present the methods that will be used to ensure confidentiality of records and information once data are made available for research purposes.

- (f) Discuss potential pitfalls that may be encountered and how they will be addressed; and
(g) Discuss any limitations to proposed procedures.

7. Experience, capacity, qualifications, and use of staff

Briefly describe the grant applicant's organizational capabilities and experience in conducting pertinent research projects. The proposal should detail the applicant's experience in conducting projects using linked administrative program data or identify key subcontractors with such experience. If the grant applicant plans to contract for any of the work, and the contractors have not been retained, the applicant should describe the process by which they will be selected. Identify the key staff who are expected to carry out the project and provide a resume or curriculum vitae for each person. Provide a discussion of how key staff will contribute to the success of the project, including the percentage of each staff member's time that will be devoted to the project. Finally, applicants should demonstrate access to computer hardware and software for storing and analyzing the data necessary to complete this project.

8. *Work plan*

A work plan should be included which lists the start and end dates of the project, a time line which indicates the sequence of tasks necessary for the completion of the project, and the responsibilities of each of the key staff. The plan should identify the time commitments of key staff members in both absolute and percentage terms, including other projects and teaching or managerial responsibilities. The work plan also should include plans for dissemination of the results of the study (e.g., articles in journals, presentations to State legislatures or at conferences). As noted above, ERS prefers that the data be edited as appropriate for confidentiality and issued as a public-use data file. The work plan should detail how resulting data and analysis will be made available to qualified researchers and to ERS. If the grant applicant believes that provision of a public-use file would be impossible, the application should explain why and should fully articulate how the applicant will make the data available to qualified researchers and to ERS.

9. *Budget narrative*

Grant applicants must submit a request for federal funds using Standard Form 424A and include a detailed breakdown of all Federal line items. A narrative explanation of the budget should be included that states clearly how the funds associated with this announcement will be used and describes the extent to which funds will be used for purposes that would not otherwise be incorporated within the project. If applicable, the applicant should also document the level of funding from other sources and describe how these funds will be expended.

All applicants must budget for two trips to the Washington, D.C., area, for at least two members of the research team. At the first meeting, Grantees will have the opportunity to meet, discuss their projects, and receive feedback from both the other Grantees and from ERS staff and invited experts. The second meeting will be approximately eight to ten months into the grant period, and will provide Grantees with the ability to meet and discuss their progress to date, and assess and receive technical assistance with any problems that have arisen.

10. *Proposed research products*

All applications must propose a publically available research report as an anticipated output. Additional products may include journal articles, other reports, and conference presentations.

11. *Citations to project description*

All references cited should be complete, including titles and all co-authors, and should conform to an accepted journal format.

12. *Collaborative arrangements*

If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or subcontractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, the applicant must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaboration. Evidence (that is, letters of intent) should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the

collaborators involved have agreed to render this service. When a project requests funds for multiple institutions, a lead institution must be designated. Only one proposal may be submitted for the project and only from the lead institution. Other institutions may be designated as subcontractors. Proposals with Application for Funding Cover Pages from more than one institution are not permitted and will be returned without review. Identical proposals submitted by different investigators from different institutions are also not permitted and will be returned without review.

13. Vitae and publications lists

To assist peer reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, all personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. For the Principal Investigator and each co-investigator listed on the Application for Funding Cover Page, for all collaborators and other senior personnel who expect to work on the project in a significant fashion (for instance, expectation of co-authorships on ensuing publications) whether or not funds are sought for their support, and for all subcontractors, the following should be included:

- *Curriculum Vitae (CV)*. The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, such as educational, employment, and professional history, honors, and awards.
- *Publications List(s)*. A chronological list of publications in refereed journals, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Also list non-refereed technical publications relevant to the proposed project. All authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete references as these usually appear in journals.

Each CV (with associated publication list) shall be no more than four pages in length.

14. Indirect cost rate schedule

For reimbursement of indirect costs, the applicant must include with the application a copy of its indirect cost rate schedule that reports the applicant's federally negotiated audited rate.

15. Current and Pending Support

The information in this section of the proposal provides reviewers with an opportunity to evaluate the contribution the proposed work will make to the investigators' overall research program. The proposal must list any other current public or private research support (including in-house support) to the Principal Investigator or co-investigators, whether or not salary support for the person(s) involved is included in the budget. ERS must be informed of changes in pending grant support that arise after the proposal has been submitted. Nonflexible funds—including Principal Investigator and support staff salaries, office space, and other indirect costs—may be excluded when these funds are received through a noncompetitive process. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals, including this proposal, that are now

being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs or agencies. Note that this proposal must be listed as Pending. In addition to completing the information, Investigators also should include a brief statement of research objectives or project summaries for all projects listed in Current and Pending Support. Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to other possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation by the Program Manager or experts engaged by the Program Manager for this purpose. However, a proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by ERS will not be funded under this program.

Please include the following information under the heading “Current and Pending Support”:

- Record information for active and pending projects in separate sections by name, supporting agency, total funding amount, effective and expiration dates, percentage of time committed, and title of project.
- All current research to which the Principal Investigator, co-investigators, and other senior personnel have committed a portion of their time must be listed, whether or not salary for the person involved is included in the budgets of the various projects.

16. Additions to project description

Each project description is expected to be complete without the need to refer to additional materials. However, additions to the Project Description (appendices) are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed research. These may include reprints (papers that have been published in peer-reviewed journals) or preprints (manuscripts in press for a peer-reviewed journal must be accompanied by letter of acceptance from the publishing journal). Manuscripts sent in support of the proposal should be single-spaced and printed on both sides of the page. Each manuscript must be identified with the name of the submitting organization, the name of the Principal Investigator, and the title of the proposal, and be securely attached to each copy of the proposal. Staff of FANRP will not collate applicant proposals or proposal addenda. Information may not be appended to a proposal to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the project description. Extraneous materials will not be used during the review process.

D. Application Submission

You may submit your application in either hard copy (paper) or electronic format. To submit an application electronically, you must use the <http://www.grants.gov> website. Electronic applications will not be accepted if e-mailed.

1. *Hard Copy Submission*

Address paper applications to

*David Smallwood
Economic Research Service
Food Economics Division
1800 M Street, NW, Suite N-2130
Washington, DC, 20036.*

Applicants must submit an original application plus 10 copies. The original copy must bear a pen-and-ink signature of the person authorized to incur contractual obligations on behalf of the applicant.

Deadline. The closing (deadline) date for submission of paper applications is Wednesday, February 17, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Mailed applications must be received by ERS by 5:00 p.m. local Eastern Standard Time.

Applications hand-carried by applicants, applicant couriers, or other representatives of the applicant shall be considered as meeting the announced deadline if they are received on or before the deadline date.

2. *Electronic Submission*

Electronic submission is voluntary but strongly encouraged. You may access the electronic application for this announcement at <http://www.Grants.gov>. There you can search for the downloadable application package by utilizing the Grants.gov FIND function. You will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off-line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. ERS will not accept grant applications via facsimile or email. ERS strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. ERS encourages applicants that submit electronically to submit well before the closing date and time so that if difficulties are encountered an applicant can have adequate time to resolve any unanticipated problems.

Electronic applications will be accepted until 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time of the closing date — electronic applications received after this time will be classified as late.

Deadline: The closing (deadline) date for submission of applications is Wednesday, February 17, 2010.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before you submit an electronic application, you must complete the organization registration process as well as obtain and register "electronic signature credentials" for the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Since this process may take more than five business days, it is important to start this process early, well in advance of the application deadline. **Be sure to complete all Grants.gov registration processes listed on the Organization Registration**

Please note the following when submitting your application electronically via Grants.gov:

- To use Grants.gov, you, as the applicant, must have a D-U-N-S number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. **REMINDER: CCR registration expires each year and thus must be updated annually. You cannot upload an application to Grants.gov without having a current CCR registration AND electronic signature credentials for the AOR.**
- The electronic application is submitted by the AOR. To submit electronically, the AOR must obtain and register electronic signature credentials approved by the organization's E-Business Point of Contact who maintains the organization's CCR registration.
- You may submit all documents electronically, including the SF-424 application, SF-424-A budget form, the contents of the proposal and any related attachments, preferably as a single pdf file.
- Your application **may not exceed 40 pages of single-spaced text** and may not exceed a total of 80 pages, including attachments.
- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. ERS will retrieve your application from Grants.gov.
- ERS may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.
- If you encounter difficulties in using Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Help Desk at: 1-800-518-4726, or by email at support@grants.gov to report the problem and obtain assistance.
- Checklists and registration brochures are maintained at <http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted> to assist you in the registration process.

Late applications. Applications that do not meet the criteria above are considered late applications. ERS will notify each late applicant that its application will not be considered in the current competition.

Extension of deadlines. ERS may extend an application deadline when circumstances warrant (such as widespread disruptions of Internet service). Appeals to extend or waive deadline requirements should be sent to:

*David Smallwood
Deputy Director for Food Assistance Research
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service
1800 M Street, NW, Room N2130
Washington, DC 20036*

Telephone: 202-694-5466

E-mail: FANRP@ers.usda.gov

E. Disposition of Applications

1. **Approval, disapproval, or deferral.** On the basis of the review of the application, ERS will either a) approve the application as a whole or in part; b) disapprove the application; or c) defer action on the application for such reasons as lack of funds or a need for further review.
2. **Notification of disposition.** ERS will notify the applicants of the disposition of their applications. If approved, a signed notification of the award will be sent to the business office named in the application.
3. **Economic Research Service's Discretion.** Nothing in this announcement should be construed as to obligate the Economic Research Service to make any awards whatsoever. Awards and the distribution of awards are contingent on adequate funding, the needs of ERS, and the quality of the applications that are received.

F. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number is 10.253.

G. Checklist of a Complete Application

- ✓ Application for Federal Domestic Assistance Form-Short Organizational (SF-424)
 - Is all required information accurate and complete?
 - Is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number: 10.253?
 - Has the authorized organizational representative signed the SF-424?
 - Is the CFDA Title: Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Programs?
 - Have you included a telephone number and e-mail address where a message may be left for you?
 - Have you included the requested total funding amount from the budget form?
- ✓ Budget Form (SF-424A)
 - Are budget items complete?
 - Is the summary budget included?
 - Is the funding level total in line k within the stated limit of \$500,000 for the program proposal?
 - Is the budget duration within the stated 12 months?
- ✓ Proposal and All Attachments in PDF (for electronic submissions through Grants.gov)
- ✓ Program Summary Page
 - Is the program title listed at the top?
 - Has the Program Summary been included?

- Does the summary include program objectives?
 - Is the summary no more than 250 words?
 - Do the name and contact person of the State research organization or academic research institution appear on the page, or on the following page?
 - Does the page include the total amount requested?
 - Does the page include the proposed start and end date?
- ✓ Table of Contents
- Are page numbers included for each item?
- ✓ Program Description
- Is the program fully described?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations, as specified?
 - Does the program description contain a tentative schedule or work plan of major steps of study?
- ✓ Vitae and Publications List(s)
- Are vitae included for the RIDGE Center Director and key program personnel?
 - Are the vitae current and pertinent?
 - Are the publications lists complete and limited to the last 5 years?
- ✓ Indirect Cost Rate Schedule
- For reimbursement of indirect costs, is a copy included of the applicant's indirect cost rate schedule that reports the applicant's federally negotiated audited rate?
- ✓ General
- Does the proposal conform to all format and page limitations and deadline requirements?
 - Are all copies complete?