I’m Thinking of Applying for the USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

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Is your organization a good match for CFP?

Think carefully about how well the mission and programs of your organization match with the goals and purposes of the CFP program. Will your project ideas meet the CFP goals?

The purpose of the CFP is to support the development of projects with a one-time infusion of federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining. CFPs should be designed to create community-based food projects with objectives, activities and outcomes that are in alignment with CFPCGP primary goals. Preference will be given to CFPs designed to:

(i) Develop connections between two or more sectors of the food system;
(ii) Support the development of entrepreneurial projects;
(iii) Develop innovative connections between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; or
(iv) Encourage long-term planning activities, and multi-system, interagency approaches with collaborations from multiple stakeholders that build the long-term capacity of communities to address the food and agricultural problems of the communities, such as food policy councils and food planning associations.
Key Words and Phrases:

“...one-time infusion of federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining.”

Your project should be completely accomplished during the grant period with no need for additional CFP funds to continue it.

“CFPs should be designed to create community-based food projects...”

Your project design needs to be based on community needs and concerns that you can document have come from the community to be served. It must be “community-based, not community-placed.”

Community Food Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by bringing the whole food system together to assess strengths, establish linkages, and create systems that improve the self-reliance of community members over their food needs. CFP summary on Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food page.
Feel like you are a good match for this funding? Okay! Let’s get started...

First step: Google “USDA CFP RFA” and that will get you to [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/community_food.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/community_food.html), the FY2013 application. Download the text version and start a folder for this grant with it. *Page numbers from this RFA will be used as references throughout this presentation.*

Read this RFA all the way through.

Now you are ready to start thinking about ideas for program plan.
Examples of CFP Projects (funding limit of $300,000 over 3 years) include, but are not limited to, community gardens with market stands, value chain projects, food hubs, farmers’ markets, farm-to-institutions projects, and marketing & consumer cooperatives. All projects must involve low-income participants.

Examples of PPs (Planning Projects with funding limit of $25,000 over 3 years) include, but are not limited to, community food assessments, coordination of collaboration development, GIS analysis, food sovereignty study, and farm-to-institution exploration. All projects must involve low-income participants.
For inspiration and ideas...check out successfully funded CFP projects.

Find these:

• NIFA CFP page Under Related CFP Information > Results and Impacts > Active Projects (2004 Grants) on NIFA page sidebar

• The NIFA Newsroom page for 2013 grantees.  

• At WHY Hunger http://www.whyhunger.org and type “cfp” into the search box for 22 pages of projects.

• National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture website...type in cfp in search box for several links.
Now that you have a clear understanding of the CFP programs, it is time to decide on the actual project that will be the focus of your CFP proposal.

Key staff and community members should meet to discuss ideas and narrow it down to those that best match the CFP program goals and your organization’s capacity.
Preference will be given to CFPs designed to:

(i) Develop connections between two or more sectors of the food system;
(ii) Support the development of entrepreneurial projects;
(iii) Develop innovative connections between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; or
(iv) Encourage long-term planning activities, and multi-system, interagency approaches with collaborations from multiple stakeholders that build the long-term capacity of communities to address the food and agricultural problems of the communities, such as food policy councils and food planning associations.

Ask yourselves these questions:

Do your project objectives, activities and outcomes support at least two or three of the CFP goals?

Does your project include linkages between several sectors of your local food system?

CFP places huge emphasis on community involvement at many levels, all leading to improved access to healthy foods in low-income communities that will continue after the grant period.
If you can answer YES to all of these questions, you are ready to apply:

• Your organization meets all eligibility requirements or you have a Fiscal Agent who meets them.

• Your project goals and outcomes are relevant to the Community Food Projects national program goals.

• Your organization and community partners will be able to meet the 100% match requirement with cash or in-kind contributions to the project.

• You will be able to have everything in place, including letters of commitment for match and letters of support from community partners, in time to meet the application submission deadline.

• You have access to high speed internet, appropriate software for producing PDF documents and access to grants.gov for submission.
Now you are ready to start getting your “duckies in a row!”

CFP requires a lot of organizational information and evidence of community involvement in the planning and implementation of the project. You need to start gathering documents and preparing for submission long before the RFA is published.
Things you need to have in place for the proposal package:

• Proof that the Applicant Organization is “a nonprofit entity.”
  IRS 501(c)(3) letter, incorporation certificate or, Letter stating that applicant is a tribal government or department of a tribal government.

• Fiscal Agent Letter describing willingness to participate in CFP project, grant period, fiscal sponsorship fee, if any, and signed by Authorized Organizational Representative. See page 7 for how to label this letter.

• DUNS Number

• Registration with grants.gov. See details on pages 10 and 11.

This process takes a minimum of two weeks to complete so get started right now!
http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

ORGANIZATION REGISTRATION

APPLICANT ACTIONS
- Apply for Grants
- Track My Application

APPLICANT RESOURCES
- Grant Eligibility
- Individual Registration
- Organization Registration
  - STEP 1: Obtain DUNS Number
  - STEP 2: Register with SAM
  - STEP 3: Username & Password
  - STEP 4: AOR Authorization
  - STEP 5: Track AOR Status
- Grant Application Process
- Applicant FAQs
- Applicant Resources
- Applicant Tips

Registering as an Organization

This is where the process of registering your organization for access to Grants.gov begins. Your organization must be registered to apply for grants.

Brief Overview of Registration Process

NOTE: Registration takes, approximately, 3-5 business days; but, allow 4 weeks to complete all steps.

Foreign Registrants: Anyone residing and doing business outside of the United States is still required to complete the five steps of the Grants.gov registration process, in addition to fulfilling supplementary requirements for doing business with the United States government.

STEP 1: Obtain DUNS Number
Same day, if requested by phone (1-866-705-5711). DUNS is provided immediately. If your organization does not have one, you will need to go to the Dun & Bradstreet website at http://fedegov.drb.com/webform to obtain the number. Information for Foreign Registrants. Webform requests take 1-2 business days.

STEP 2: Register with SAM
Three to five business days or up to two weeks. If you already have a TIN, your SAM registration will take 3-5 business days to process. If they are applying for an EIN, please allow up to 2 weeks. Ensure that your organization is registered with the System for Award Management (SAM) at System for Award Management (SAM). If your organization is not, an authorizing official of your organization must register.

STEP 3: Username & Password
Same day. Complete your AOR (Authorized Organization Representative) profile on Grants.gov and create your username and password. You will need to use your organization’s DUNS Number to complete this step. Create a Username and Password.

STEP 4: AOR Authorization
Same day. The E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) at your organization must login to Grants.gov to confirm you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Please note that there can be more than one AOR for your organization. In some cases the E-Biz POC is also the AOR for an organization. *Time depends on responsiveness of your E-Biz POC.

STEP 5: Track AOR Status
At any time, you can track your AOR status by logging in with your username and password. Login as an Applicant (enter your username & password you obtained in Step 3).

Attention Faculty or Staff of Educational Institutions
To submit your application via Grants.gov, you should first check with your Office of Sponsored Programs* to verify that your organization is registered with Grants.gov. It is the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) of your organization who must register the educational institution or applicant organization. Most applications by faculty, staff, or other principal investigators are actually submitted on behalf of the institution at which they are employed; awards are made to the institution. All registration steps for the institution are completed by the AOR; likewise, the AOR is the person who must actually submit the application to Grants.gov. Questions about Grants.gov should be directed first to your Office of Sponsored Programs, which will assist you in submitting your application. Please provide that office with sufficient notice of your intent to apply using Grants.gov.

The only time it is appropriate to register as an individual with Grants.gov is when you are submitting an application that specifies it is open only to individuals, such as for an individual fellowship or traineeship.

*Your organization may refer to the office as Research, Sponsored Research, Grants, Development, or a similar title.
grants.gov registration process

Registration in Brief:
Registration takes approximately 3-5 business days, but allow 4 weeks for completion of all steps.

STEP 1: Obtain DUNS Number
Same day. If requested by phone (1-866-705-5711) DUNS is provided immediately. If your organization does not have one, you will need to go to the Dun & Bradstreet website at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform [EXIT Disclaimer] to obtain the number. *Information for Foreign Registrants.*Webform requests take 1-2 business days.

STEP 2: Register with SAM
Three to five business days or up to two weeks. If you already have a TIN, your SAM registration will take 3-5 business days to process. If you are applying for an EIN please allow up to 2 weeks. Ensure that your organization is registered with the System for Award Management (SAM) at System for Award Management (SAM). If your organization is not, an authorizing official of your organization must register.

STEP 3: Username & Password
Same day. Complete your AOR (Authorized Organization Representative) profile on Grants.gov and create your username and password. You will need to use your organization’s DUNS Number to complete this step. https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/OrcRegister.

STEP 4: AOR Authorization
*Same day. The E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) at your organization must login to Grants.gov to confirm you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Please note that there can be more than one AOR for your organization. In some cases the E-Biz POC is also the AOR for an organization. *Time depends on responsiveness of your E-Biz POC.

STEP 5: TRACK AOR STATUS
At any time, you can track your AOR status by logging in with your username and password. Login as an Applicant (enter your username & password you obtained in Step 3) using the following link: applicant_profile.jsp
Evidence that your organization “(a) have experience in the area of (i) community food work, particularly concerning small and medium-size farms, including the provision of food to people in low-income communities and the development of new markets in low-income communities for agricultural producers; or (ii) job training and business development activities for food-related activities in low-income communities; (b) demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, and prepare reports and other necessary documentation; and (c) demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties, including a plan for dissemination of results.” from the CFP RFA

This information can be
- Woven into the narrative
- Reflected in the Letters of Support
- Described in the Financial Management Statement
- Shown in attachments i.e. newsletters, media stories, event announcements, etc.
- Included in resumes
- Included in Evaluation or Information/Results Dissemination Plans

NOTE: CFP grants are not intended for “start-up” organizations. Grantees must be able to prove capacity to manage federal funds. If you are a new organization, find an experienced Fiscal Agent to administer the funds and apply for a Planning Grant to gather your baseline data to plan for future Community Food (Sovereignty) Projects.
Documentation that the program design came from ideas generated in your community with involvement by those who will benefit from your program.

- Community Food Sovereignty Assessment results
- Notes from focus groups including who participated
- Survey results from public events
- Feasibility studies
- Tribal resolutions (not required, but good indicator of community need if available)
- Food Policy Council recommendations
- Summaries of informal conversations with key people involved in community food system.

Being able to prove that your community was involved in the development of your plan is key for success with CFP. You have time to generate some of this info, but it needs to be done right away!

Be sure to always have sign-in sheets
Project name

• Project personnel identified
Be sure key personnel are firmly connected with the community
All key personnel will need a current resume

• Potential community and for-profit partners identified

• Community and organizational assets that may be used as cash or in-kind match *(more on this later)*

• Preliminary timeline for the project

Do these things before you write one word of the proposal.

All of these pieces are important and will take time to get into place. Your staff should meet **now** to begin planning and putting everything in place. Once your staff has a solid idea of how you want to proceed, you will be ready to call in your community partners for planning.
To complete your planning process go to the sidebar on the right and read everything under each topic. Pay attention to the FAQ’s about “matching funds.” Allow time for ED/grant writer to completely understand everything...at least one full day for this background research.
Now you are ready to start designing your program plan for your CFP Proposal. Make informal notes to:

- Create Project Goal(s) and Objectives
- List Intended Outcomes for each Objective
- Outline possible activities to achieve the Intended Outcomes
- Create a simple Timeline
- Identify Project Director, staff and community partners
- Create a draft budget

Save the pdf using the bar that appears at the bottom of the page. (if you just use file save, it will not work.)

- Read All of the NIFA Application Guide
- Key staff and partners agree on all of the above.
Planning Grants
The purpose of a Planning Project (PP) is to complete a plan toward the improvement of community food security in keeping with the primary goals of the CFPCGP (see Part I, B.) PPs are to focus on a defined community and describe in detail the activities and outcomes of the planning project.

Funding limit - $25,000 with equal match

Time limit - Three years, but usually completed in less time

Perfect for Community Food Sovereignty Assessments, Food Policy Council organization, Farm to School plans, etc.

Planning Grants must address the general CFP program goals.
Community Food Project Grants

The purpose of the CFP is to support the development of projects with a one-time infusion of federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining. CFPs should be designed to create community-based food projects with objectives, activities and outcomes that are in alignment with CFPCGP primary goals.

Funding limit - $300,000 with equal match. No more than $125,000 in a single year.

Time limit - Three years

Community Food Project Grants must address the general CFP program goals.

All CFP awards will be made based on the merit of the proposed project with budgets considered only after the merits of the project have been determined. USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants.
Project Narrative

Pages 12-15 in the RFA

Page limit:
• 10 pages for narrative,
• 5 pages for “figures and tables” i.e. Logic Model, Timeline, etc.
• 7 pages for “Appendices” to the narrative...documents directly related to the project
• Required government forms do not count against the page limits.

Organize your proposal with components in the same order and using the same headings as appear in the RFA.

Format the narrative in a way that makes it easy for the reader to understand locate project details.
The Community to Be Involved in the Project and the Needs to Be Addressed.
- Describe landscape, remote location and other details that will bring your community to life.
- Remember that many of the readers will be from urban areas and academic backgrounds and they may be completely unfamiliar with the government, surroundings and lifestyles of contemporary Native Americans.
- Describe the community involvement in the process of planning this project.
- Use current income and other demographic statistics.

The Organizations and Communities Involved in the Project.
- Clearly describe all partners and their roles in planning and implementing this project.
- Describe how the partners contribute to the project program plan.
- Too many partners can be confusing and strain the budget.
- Be sure that you have Letters of Support and/or Commitment from all partners named.

Project Goals and Intended Outcomes.
- Outcomes are basically the same thing as objectives, but with emphasis on results to be achieved.
- Your project goals should relate directly to the national CFP program goals.
- Be specific and detailed.

Activities to Achieve the Goals.
- Describe in a way that makes it obvious to the reader that you know what to do and how to do it.
- Make sure activities match the Timeline, Milestones and Budget Narrative.

Relationship to Program Objectives.
- Address as many of the CFP national program goals as possible.
These components are only required for the CFP proposals and not for the Planning grant proposals:

**Evaluation.**
- Create Logic Model and Milestones Chart to support evaluation.
- You may want to hire an outside and experienced Evaluator.
- Should be no more than 10% of budget

**Self-Sustainability.**
- Include business plans with future projections.
- Avoid assumptions of future income from farming or other high-risk activities.
- Be very specific about future funding sources and back statements up with letters from funders or other documentation to show that you are realistically planning for the future beyond the “one-time infusion of federal funds.”

Put your best writer on this task and allow at least one month for him/her to focus on it. Many of the CFP proposals are written by professional grant writers. Almost all of the proposals will be worthy of funding, but only 18% were funded in the last round. The reviewers who read these and make decisions have a very hard job to do. Make it as easy on them as possible to choose your proposal as one of the most deserving of funding.
The Budget and Budget Narrative

• No single CFP award shall exceed $125,000 in any single year or more than $300,000 over three years.
• Grant funds may be used to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility, or to acquire land; and for improvements, alterations, renovations, or repairs to land or buildings, necessary to carry out a funded project under this program.
• The applicant shall perform a substantive portion of the project and no more than 50 percent of a CFP or PP, as determined by budget expenditures, may be sub awarded.
• All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in section 23 of 7 CFR 3019, “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations.”

CFP requires that all grant funds be matched with either cash or in-kind donations. No match can come from federal sources. Everything is laid out on pages 17 and 18 in the RFA.

Read it all and carefully follow instructions.
Watch the webinar from Oct. 16, 2012 on the CFP website and pay attention to details!
Matching cash and in-kind donations must be secured and proven at time of submission.
You will prepare these budget documents:

• R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Form spreadsheet (supplied in grants.gov application package)
• Budget Justification for grant funds showing how you arrived at the amounts.
• Budget Justification for match showing how you arrived at the amounts.
• Summary of matching support showing “The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant organization...” on a page of its own.
• Letters of Commitment from all match sources, both cash and in-kind. This includes any match that your organization is providing as well as all third-party contributions.
• Contractual agreements and resumes for any sub-contractors named in proposal.

Except for the R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Form, all of the above documents need to be combined into one PDF that will be attached to the budget section of the application on grants.gov.

If in doubt, contact the NIFA Awards Management Division:

Dr. Adriene Woodin, Director, awoodin@nifa.usda.gov 202-401-4320
Susan Bowman, Assistant, sbowman@nifa.usda.gov 202-401-4324
General info, 202-401-4986

For allowable costs questions refer to OMB A-122 (nonprofits) or OMB A-87 (tribes).
Cash or in-kind donations must meet the same standards of allowable costs as the grant funds budget items. Refer to OMB A-122 or A-87 if not clear in RFA.

The amount of match can vary each year, but the total at the end of the grant period must be equal to or more than the amount of grant funds requested.

All match amounts must be “allowable” and justified as to relevance to the project and reasonability of costs.

You can not use your office space as match if your organization owns it.

You can not use anything for match that is not specifically used for this project only.

You need to use depreciated value for any used items.

Salaries may be used as match as long as they are not from federal sources. You need to show base salary and percent of time devoted to this project for all salaries.

Pay rates for volunteers and consultants used as match must be justifiable as the usual rate for this type of work in your location. At least $15 an hour is an acceptable minimum rate.

Show all matching funds and dollar amounts of in-kind donations in the R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Form spreadsheet. Put them in the appropriate categories under “non-federal.” Put Third-party donations under “Other Direct Costs” in the Non-Fed column.

If you have a sub award, that agreement will go on an attachment of its own (page 46 in NIFA Guide. If the sub-awardee will supply any match, put it in the budget and budget justifications with all other match.
Match Letters of Commitment

Content requirements for match letters of commitment are described on pages 17 and 18 of the RFA. Follow these directions exactly.

Be sure to:

• Have all letters on the donor’s letterhead with name, address and phone contact information.
• Have letters signed with pen and ink or a certified digital signature.
• Include the applicant’s name (that’s your organization), project name and specific dates of the grant period.
• If it is a cash donation, the letter should state that it is cash.
• If the cash is for a specific expense that needs to be stated. Likewise, if it for general use for the project during the grant period, that should be stated clearly.
• Include the dollar amount for the donation and a brief statement of how that was established (the good faith estimate mentioned on RFA page 18).

Do Not:

• Wait until the last minute to get the letters. This is a fatal mistake!
• Include any match in the budget forms or justification for which you do not have a letter of commitment.
• Include any in-kind or cash that is derived from federal funds.
• Use a form letter or template. You could give each person writing the letters a checklist of the required elements and let them put the letter in their own words.
• Use emails as letters of commitment.
Letters of Support

Group all of your letters of support into one PDF file to be attached in Field 12 of the application package.

Be sure to:

• Have current letters on letterhead with contact info and signed as above.
• Your organization’s name and project name.
• Make sure your letters are for this grant and this year.

Do not:

• Wait until the last minute to get these letters.
• Use a form letter or template. You could give each person writing the letters the information that needs to be included and let them put the support portion of the letter in their own words. You could ask them to describe the benefit the project will have for them or their community, if funded. Collecting these letters can be very time-consuming, so plan ahead.
• Use emails as letters of support.

Letters of support are a vital part of the CFP application. They can tie the project firmly to the people of the community and express how the grant funds will benefit low-income people in real life situations. Letters from community members are as important as from leaders and politicians. It is alright to have hand-written letters. Letters should always relate directly to the project that is being proposed.
Tips and shortcuts that have helped me:

• List people you will get letters of support/commitment from.
• List all required docs and make yourself a checklist.
• List all elements in proposal and page limits for each element.
• Do budget in excel in same format as budget form on application.
• Call Program Staff in Washington, DC or the 800 numbers with technical questions. Be sure you have read all instructions before calling DC.
• Make the budget narrative as easy to follow as possible using budget categories and language from RFA.
• Put proposal elements in the order that the application package has them and make the same categories and sub-categories.
• Use the same language and formatting for proposal elements/categories/sub-categories as used in the RFA.
• Check, double check, triple check that you have all categories covered.
• Make file folder for all grant package materials that are ready to submit.
• Usually do abstract or summary last.
• Make hard copies of everything and back up everyday to a flashdrive or external hard drive.
Don’t be overwhelmed!
Start now, read the RFA, do your research, pay attention to details, relax, be creative and create your CFP proposal!

Thank you and Good Luck!!!