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# **Request for Applications for Competitive Grant Awards To Establish RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research**

## **Fiscal 2010**

Description and Application Process



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Economic Research for a Healthy, Well-Nourished America



*Food Assistance & Nutrition  
Research Program*

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Economic Research Service, Food Economics Division  
Food and Nutrition Assistance Research Innovation and Development  
Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program**

# **Request for Applications for Competitive Grant Awards To Establish RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research**

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**SUMMARY:** The Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) of USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) announces the recompetition of the grants that fund partner institutions to administer the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program. The competition (1) provides renewed focus on economic aspects of food and nutrition assistance research, (2) stimulates new and innovative research on domestic food and nutrition assistance issues, (3) further broadens the network of social scientists who collaborate in expanding the understanding of the economic, nutrition, and health outcomes of participation in USDA’s food assistance programs as well as the issues surrounding program implementation and delivery, and (4) achieves cost savings through consolidation of RIDGE Centers from the previous five institutions to two institutions.

ERS invites applications from university-based institutions for competitive grant awards to oversee the application, peer review, subgrant award, and quality-assurance processes of the RIDGE Program. ERS expects to fund two RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2010—one center focusing on food and nutrition assistance research at the national level (the RIDGE Center for National Studies) and the second center targeting specific populations, such as, but not limited to, immigrants, Native Americans, people living in rural areas, or residents of “food deserts” who experience limited access to healthy foods (the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies). Subject to the availability of funds, the first year of funding will be approximately \$250,000 for the RIDGE Center for National Studies and \$250,000 for the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. ERS expects to provide additional funding to the RIDGE Centers for 3 more years for a total of 4 years (FY 2010 through FY 2013), each year at a comparable level to the first, to complete a 5-year program cycle (the fifth year to conduct projects funded in year 4).

There are no matching requirements from the RIDGE Centers over the term of the agreement.

Applicants may submit proposals for both the RIDGE Center for National Studies and RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies, but must do so on separate applications. Although applicants may submit proposals for both RIDGE Centers, they may be selected for only one.

**CLOSING DATE:** The closing date for submitting applications under this announcement is **September 15, 2009**. Please email Alex Majchrowicz at [alexm@ers.usda.gov](mailto:alexm@ers.usda.gov) by September 1, 2009, to inform ERS of your intent to submit an application. Include the name of your organization. Providing notice of intent to submit is not a requirement for submitting an application. However, a notice of intent to submit will help ERS in the planning for the review process.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** The posted notice through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) is the only official program announcement. Any corrections to this announcement will be published on the ERS website at [www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/ridge.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/ridge.htm) and the [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) website. The applicant bears sole responsibility in ensuring 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](http://www.grants.gov) and will not be accepted if e-mailed. Hard copy (paper) applications should be mailed to:

*Alex Majchrowicz  
Assistant Deputy Director for Extramural Research Management  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Economic Research Service  
1800 M Street, NW, Room N2171  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: 202-694-5355  
Fax: 202-694-5661  
E-mail: [alexm@ers.usda.gov](mailto:alexm@ers.usda.gov)*

You will receive a telephone or e-mail confirmation that your hard copy application was received and its status. If you do not receive such confirmation, please contact Alex Majchrowicz at the mail, e-mail, or telephone number provided above.

**FORM REQUESTS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS:**

Requests for hard copy forms will be accepted and responded to until September 1, 2009. Requests for hard copy forms and administrative and technical questions should be directed to Alex Majchrowicz (contact information above).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This program announcement consists of four parts:

- Part I. Background—Eligible Applicants, Program History and Purpose, Available Funds in FY 2010, Matching Requirements, and Project and Budget Period;
- Part II. Responsibilities of the Awardees and the Federal Government in the Establishment and Operation of the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research—Awardee Responsibilities for the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research, ERS Responsibilities, and Joint Responsibilities;
- 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. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants for the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research are restricted to public or private institutions of higher education.

#### **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 online at <http://www.dnb.com>.

### **B. Program History and Purpose**

USDA administers 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs that work both individually and collectively to provide participants with food, the means to purchase food, and nutrition education. These programs affect the lives of millions of people. In fiscal year 2008, participation in the Food Stamp Program, now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), averaged nearly 28.4 million people per month, or

about 1 in 11 Americans. During the same year, almost 31 million children—about 55 percent of all schoolchildren—participated in the National School Lunch Program on a typical school day. Meanwhile, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) served almost half of all infants born in the United States and about a quarter of all children ages 1-4. In total, about one in five Americans participate in at least one of USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs at some point during the year. At a cost of almost \$61 billion in fiscal year 2008—almost two-thirds of USDA's annual budget—these programs represent a significant Federal investment.

Because of the importance of the food and nutrition assistance programs to both program participants and taxpayers, sound research is needed to ensure that the programs operate effectively and efficiently. To carry out this research mission, the Economic Research Service (ERS)—the primary source of economic information and research in USDA—established the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP), of which the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program is a part. Using a strong economic framework to guide the research, FANRP has become the premier source of economic research on USDA's programs to meet the critical information needs of USDA, Congress, policy officials, program participants, the research community, and the public at large. To address the needs of this diverse group, FANRP conducts a multifaceted research plan consisting of both intramural and extramural research. The intramural program, conducted by ERS research staff, uses the agency's large research capacity, taking advantage of researchers' experience and specialized knowledge. At the same time, FANRP funds extramural research, often conducted jointly with ERS staff, that draws on the multidisciplinary expertise of nationally recognized social and nutrition science researchers and the resources of numerous noted institutions.

Central to the mission of FANRP is building research capacity and networks by supporting established researchers and mentoring emerging scholars whose interests focus on economic aspects of food and nutrition assistance. To stimulate new and innovative research on food assistance and nutrition issues and to broaden the participation of social science scholars in these issues, FANRP sponsors the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Program (known as the Small Grants Program during 1998-2006). RIDGE supports both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore economic, nutrition, and health outcomes of participation in USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs as well as issues surrounding program implementation and delivery. In recent years, the RIDGE Program has provided grants to researchers in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000 for 1-year projects. Since its inception in 1998, RIDGE has funded more than 200 projects at over 100 higher education institutions across the Nation, highlighting the program's emphasis to make better use of State and local research expertise to understand food and nutrition assistance programs' performance and outcomes. The local issue aspect of RIDGE is particularly important as States add unique features to their welfare programs and as the needs and circumstances of local population groups vary. Thus, RIDGE provides an opportunity to

study national programs that may be put into practice differently across States to address local needs yet remain focused on achieving the same outcome.

RIDGE has been administered through selected universities and their associated research institutes located at five sites across the United States: The American Indian Studies Program, University of Arizona; The Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago; Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin; Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis; and Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi State University. More information about the RIDGE Program and the RIDGE Centers is available at [www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/ridge.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/ridge.htm)

The competitive grant awards in this announcement replace the current grants with these five institutions to (1) provide renewed focus on economic aspects of food and nutrition assistance research, (2) stimulate new and innovative research on food and nutrition assistance issues, (3) broaden the support of both established and emerging scholars to further increase the number and diversity of food and nutrition assistance researchers that collaborate in tackling the unique food and nutrition challenges that exist across communities, regions, and States, and (4) achieve cost savings through the consolidation of RIDGE Centers.

There are no projects that must be continued from the past RIDGE Centers under this award.

### **C. Available Funds in FY 2010**

ERS anticipates having available a total of approximately \$500,000 for the first year of award to equally fund the RIDGE Center for National Studies and the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. Nothing in this announcement restricts the ability of ERS to make no awards or a lesser or greater award(s).

### **D. Matching Requirements**

The competitive grant awards to establish and operate RIDGE Centers in this announcement require no matching funds.

### **E. Project and Budget Period**

ERS expects to fund the RIDGE Centers for a period of four (4) years to conduct a 5-year program. The first year of Federal funding is expected to be \$250,000 each for the RIDGE Center for National Studies and the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. Subject to the availability of future funds, ERS expects to provide incremental funding in years 2-4 and anticipates no additional funding in year 5 as prior subawards are completed.

Applications are to include separate budget estimates for each of the 5 years. Legislative support for continued funding of the RIDGE Centers during the 5-year grant period

cannot be guaranteed, and future year funding is subject to future appropriations and approval of ERS. ERS expects, however, that the RIDGE Centers will be supported during future fiscal years of the award period at an annual level of effort consistent with the announced level. The award pursuant to this announcement will be made on or about October 30, 2009.

## **Part II. Responsibilities of the Awardees and the Federal Government in the Establishment and Operation of the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research**

### **A. Awardee Responsibilities for the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research**

The RIDGE Centers will have the primary and lead responsibility to solicit, review, and select research proposals for RIDGE subawards. RIDGE subawards should reflect the diverse goals of the program, which are to promote the development of innovative ideas and approaches, encourage established researchers not involved in food and nutrition assistance research to enter the field, and nurture new talent. Consequently, RIDGE subawards may fall into categories such as research grants to (1) experienced investigators, both those involved in food and nutrition issues or other areas, (2) recent Ph.D. graduates, or (3) Ph.D. candidates who are mentored by established researchers.

The RIDGE Centers are expected to perform the following tasks:

#### **1. Research Program**

The RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research are expected to initiate and maintain a subawards program to foster new and innovative research that may include small-scale, economic, behavioral, and policy-related projects, including pilot research projects and feasibility studies; development, testing, and refinement of research techniques; secondary analysis of available data sets; or similar research projects. RIDGE subawards should include an appropriately balanced agenda of basic and applied, quantitative and qualitative, and primary and secondary analyses. Further, the RIDGE Centers should provide intellectual leadership in the national research community by establishing links with a broad range of established scholars from other institutions.

#### **2. Expanding the Research Base**

The RIDGE Centers are expected to broaden the network of researchers that collaborate in investigating food and nutrition challenges that exist throughout the Nation by:

- Developing and expanding a diverse group of researchers who will focus their career goals on analyzing economic aspects of food and nutrition assistance issues



to ensure that USDA's nutrition programs operate effectively and efficiently. The RIDGE Centers will be expected to provide subawards to support established researchers, new postdoctoral scholars, and Ph.D. candidates. Centers are expected to provide direction to RIDGE awardees by encouraging the analysis of economic aspects of issues, expanding their research through participation in professional meetings and seminars, and developing analyses for publication in social science journals;

- Encouraging experienced researchers in other areas to add a food and nutrition assistance perspective to their research;
- Promoting innovative research methods and new data sources to further build research capacity, and;
- Developing the capacity and expertise to examine regional and local food and nutrition assistance issues.

### **3. Dissemination of Information**

Making knowledge and information available to policy officials, program participants, the research community, and the public is an important responsibility of the RIDGE Centers. RIDGE Centers are expected to develop and maintain a system to disseminate results of RIDGE-funded studies through print or electronic methods, including but not limited to, creative use of web-based technologies, newsletters, working papers, special reports, and briefings.

RIDGE Centers and subawardees are also required to participate in an annual RIDGE Conference at ERS Headquarters in Washington, DC, to present findings of completed projects. All costs to attend the conference shall be included in the competitive grants to the RIDGE Centers and should be specified as part of the subsequent subawards granted to researchers. ERS is not responsible for conference travel arrangements and other incidental expenses for RIDGE Center staff or subawardees.

RIDGE Centers will also require subawardees to prepare an Executive Summary of each funded project and furnish ERS with a publishable copy for inclusion to the electronic database of RIDGE projects (see examples at [www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/RIDGEprojects.asp](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/RIDGEprojects.asp) ).

#### ***Research Area Guidance***

ERS and the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) have identified suggested areas of interest for investigation through RIDGE subawards (see FANRP's Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program for more information on research themes at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Compgrants.htm>).

RIDGE Research Centers are expected to develop additional research topics.

### ***I. Food Choices: Economic Determinants and Consequences***

Food choices depend on food assistance and nutrition program benefits, household income, consumer preferences, as well as prices and other market factors. FANRP is interested in research on the economic determinants and consequences of food choices, including the effects of market factors, time use, and the relationships among program participation, food choices, and weight status.

### ***II. Economic Incentives in Food Assistance Programs***

FANRP is interested in research aimed at comparing the economic costs and benefits of alternative policy choices on the behavior of food and nutrition assistance program clients and others, and improving the use of administrative data for evaluation purposes. For example, topics may include but are not restricted to:

#### ***Macroeconomic Factors***

- What are the characteristics of the relationship between unemployment and participation in SNAP (e.g., in terms of timing and magnitude)?
- How do changes in food and nutrition assistance policies impact economic activity and household income across the economy and in various industry sectors, regions, and markets?

#### ***Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program***

- What are the costs and benefits of alternative policy choices aimed at improving program access (such as recently implemented policy options intended to reduce client burden), program targeting (e.g., working poor), and program integrity?
- To what extent do SNAP rules on eligibility and program operations affect household decisions regarding employment, marriage, child bearing, or savings?

#### ***Child Nutrition Programs***

- State and local school districts have adopted a wide range of policies intended to promote nutrition and wellness (for example, expanded nutrition education and restrictions on vending and other non-USDA foods for sale in schools). What are the costs of State and local policies intended to promote child nutrition and wellness and how do they affect program participation, children's food consumption, and/or other outcomes?

#### ***WIC***

- What are the full costs to WIC State and local agencies associated with promoting breastfeeding (including the value of benefits to the breastfeeding mother-child dyad) compared with the costs of providing infant formula (including the value of benefits to the nonbreastfeeding mother-child dyad, as well as the value of infant formula rebates) under the current and the revised food packages?

#### ***Improving Evaluation Methodology Through Existing Data***

- How can administrative data, collected at the local, State, or national level, be used for evaluation research, either alone or linked to survey data? Examples of potentially useful administrative data include EBT transaction data and Food

Stamp Program Quality Control data; SNAP-Ed (formerly Food Stamp Nutrition Education, or FSNE) data collected for State and national reporting; school district data on school meal participation and food purchases; WIC State food instrument issuance or redemption data; birth certificate data containing WIC and Medicaid participation information; and store scanner data.

### ***III. Food Assistance as an Economic Safety Net***

Food assistance programs are an economic safety net buffering the effects of low income and lack of assets and protecting target populations against income losses and unexpected expenses. Examples of research questions of interest include:

#### ***Economic Shocks***

- How do economic shocks, such as unemployment, inflation or the mortgage crisis, affect the number of eligibles and participants in the food and nutrition assistance programs, household spending choices, food choices, and diet quality? (For example, to what extent do rising food, energy, and housing costs affect food spending and food security?)

#### ***Multiple Program Interactions***

- What share of households participate in multiple food assistance programs versus only one or none of the programs for which they are eligible, what factors influence these participation decisions, and how do the programs work individually and additively to create a safety net?

#### ***Income Volatility***

- What is the relationship between income volatility and participation in food and nutrition assistance programs?
- To what extent do food and nutrition assistance programs affect the level and stability of spending patterns of different types of households (such as elderly households, households with and without children, single adult households, and households with earnings)?

#### ***Food Insecurity***

- What are the dynamics of food insecurity among various food assistance population subgroups?
- What are the correlates and consequences of persistent food insecurity?

#### ***Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program***

- What are the costs and consequences of potential changes in SNAP designed to improve participants' decisions regarding healthy food choices?

## **B. ERS Responsibilities**

ERS will provide (1) input to reviews of research proposals submitted to the RIDGE Centers, (2) statements of ERS food and nutrition assistance research priorities, (3) reviews of RIDGE Center reports to ensure that objectives and award conditions are

being met, (4) coordination of activities between the national and targeted RIDGE Centers to ensure, for example, a diverse selection of research projects and to eliminate duplication of research efforts, and (5) ERS technical contacts for RIDGE subawardees.

### **C. Joint Responsibilities**

ERS will work with the RIDGE Centers in jointly establishing broad research priorities and planning strategies to accomplish the objectives of this announcement. The RIDGE Centers and ERS will host an annual 1-day conference at ERS Headquarters, Washington, DC, for RIDGE subaward recipients and attendees to discuss results of food and nutrition assistance studies funded through the program. ERS facilities are provided at no cost.

## **Part III. The Review Process**

### **A. Intergovernmental Review**

State Single Point of Contact (Executive Order 12372). The U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that this program is not subject to Executive Order No. 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, because it is a program that is national in scope and the only impact on State and local governments would be through subgrants. 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 A). 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 for the RIDGE Centers for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research that meet the initial screening requirements will be evaluated and rated by a technical review panel. The panel will use the evaluation criteria listed below to score each application. The evaluation criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed program 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. Points are awarded only to applications that are responsive to the evaluation criteria within the context of this program announcement. These review results will be the primary element used by ERS in making funding decisions. 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 ERS for decisions. The point value following each criterion heading indicates the maximum numerical relative weight that each section 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**

### **(1) Approach and Program Plan (30 points)**

The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the significant trends and past related research especially as it relates to the priority research areas identified by ERS. The applicant's plan demonstrates a commitment to bring a broad-based multifaceted approach to understanding food and nutrition assistance issues existing across communities, States, regions, or the Nation. The applicant indicates an ability to select projects for funding that are scientifically sound and are likely to make significant contributions to advancing policy knowledge and the development and implementation of food and nutrition assistance programs. The applicant demonstrates the existence of, or innovative and realistic plans to establish, links with a broad range of established scholars from other institutions. The applicant specifies plans to increase the diversity of RIDGE researchers by seeking, for example, viable proposals from institutions, such as 1890 or 1994 Land-Grant Institutions. The applicant describes approaches and means used to solicit research proposals (e.g., electronic mailing list management systems, web postings, hard copy mailings) and identifies panels, advisory committees, or other systems employed to review and select proposed studies. The applicant includes plans for program activities, with proposed time schedules, in the first year as well as a 5-year agenda.

### **(2) Expanding the Research Base (20 points)**

The applicant proposes clear plans to develop and expand the diverse group of researchers that conduct food and nutrition assistance research by (1) encouraging experienced investigators to add a food and nutrition component to their research and (2) influencing emerging researchers to focus their career goals on food and nutrition assistance research and policy. The applicant's plan demonstrates methods to train and mentor Ph.D. candidates, postdoctoral students, and other research scholars that have received RIDGE subawards by conducting, for example, workshops with grantees to monitor progress and offer direction to facilitate the successful completion of projects. Applicants demonstrate plans to direct RIDGE awardees to expand their research by including analysis of economic aspects of issues, participating in professional meetings and seminars, and developing analyses for publication in food and nutrition and social science journals. Methods to develop the capacity and expertise to examine regional and local food and nutrition assistance issues are evident in plans.

### **(3) Dissemination (10 points)**

The applicant's mechanisms for sharing and communicating results of RIDGE-supported studies with a broad audience of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners demonstrates an understanding of satisfying users' needs. Dissemination of analyses and findings of RIDGE projects to interested parties may occur through creative use of web-based technologies and various media, including newsletters, working papers, special reports, and briefings.

### **(4) Quality of Proposed Staffing and Proposed Organization Arrangements (25 points)**

The applicant's proposed RIDGE Center director and staff demonstrate appropriate levels of research experience, demonstrated research skills, administrative skills, public administration experience, and relevant technical expertise. The applicant demonstrates an adequate level of director and staff time commitments to the RIDGE Center. The applicant demonstrates an ability to work in collaboration with other scholars and practitioners in search of similar goals. The applicant demonstrates existing or planned relationships with researchers at other universities and institutions. The applicant demonstrates the nature and extent of the organization's support for research, mentoring scholars, and disseminating information related to the central priorities of the host university for the RIDGE Center. The applicant demonstrates the commitment of the university (and proposed institutional unit that will contain the RIDGE Center) to support the Center's three major activities: (1) developing scholarly, policy-relevant research; (2) the mentoring and developing emerging scholars interested in food and nutrition assistance research; and (3) disseminating research and other information to a broad and dissimilar set of academic, research, and policy communities.

### **(5) Adequacy and Appropriateness of Overall Budget and the Allocation of Resources Across Administrative, Research and Other Areas (15 points)**

The applicant provides a budget that yields an efficient and effective allocation of funds to achieve the objectives of this announcement (i.e., granting subawards, building research capacity, mentoring, and disseminating information, as well as core administrative functions necessary to carry out the Center's mission). The application includes a narrative description and justification for proposed budget line items and demonstrates that the project's costs are adequate, reasonable, and necessary for the activities or personnel to be supported. The budget and narrative demonstrate a clear relationship to the approach. The applicant demonstrates the manner in which funds will be allocated to best serve the RIDGE Program's goal to provide financial support for research, including, but not necessarily limited to, the level of indirect costs (1) charged by the RIDGE Center and (2) allowed to the institutions of researchers receiving subawards.

## **Part IV. The Application Process**

### **A. General Information**

This part contains information on preparing 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 that do not address all the major tasks discussed in the Awardee Responsibilities in Part II (research subaward program, mentoring emerging scholars, and information dissemination) will not be considered for award.

These guidelines are provided to assist you in preparing an application to the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics Program as a national or targeted RIDGE Center for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research. 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](http://www.grants.gov) or by contacting Alex Majchrowicz, Assistant Deputy Director for Extramural Research Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 1800 M Street, NW, Room N2171, Washington, DC 20036, telephone 202-694-5355, fax 202-694-5661, or e-mail [alexm@ers.usda.gov](mailto:alexm@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 committee established to review applications for the announced RIDGE Centers 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 RIDGE Center, 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. In preparing the proposal, applicants are urged to ensure that the name of the RIDGE Center Director and the name of the submitting institution are included on the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance Form (SF-424).

### **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](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp)

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

Each copy of the proposal must contain an Application for Federal Domestic Assistance (SF-424) and be the first page of the application package. At least one copy of the form must contain electronic signatures when submitting via Grants.gov.

***Specific instructions for SF-424***

<b>Item</b>	<b>Specific instruction</b>
1	Type of Submission Check "Application"
2	Type of Application Check "New"
3	Date Received Leave blank
4	Applicant Identifier Leave blank
5 a & b	Federal Identifiers Leave blank
6 & 7	State Use Only Leave blank
8-9	Complete using general instructions
10	Name of Federal Agency Enter "Economic Research Service, USDA"
11	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number Enter "10.255"
	CDFA Title Enter "Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE)"
12	Funding Opportunity No. Enter "RIDGE2010001"
	Funding Opportunity Title Enter "Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics Program Fiscal 2010 RIDGE Center Competitive Grants"
13-14	Leave blank
15	<b>IDENTIFY EITHER NATIONAL OR TARGETED RIDGE CENTER</b>
16-18	Complete using general instructions
19	Check "c"
20-21	Complete using general instructions

***Standard Budget Form (SF-424A)***

A summary budget is required that details requested support for the overall program for each of the five (5) years as stated in Part I, Section F. 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***

<b>Item</b>	<b>Specific instruction</b>
1(a) Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "RIDGE"
1 (b) Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.255"
1(c), (d), (f)	Leave blank
1(e), 1(g)	Enter amount of Federal funds requested
2-4	Leave blank
5(b), (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
6-a-k (columns 2-4)	Leave blank
7-20	Leave blank
21-23	Optional

***Program Summary Page***

The proposal must contain a Program Summary Page, which must follow immediately after the budget form, and should not be numbered. The name and institution of the RIDGE Center Director should be listed on the summary page. The program summary is limited to 250 words. The program summary should be a self-contained, specific description of the activities to be undertaken and should focus on the overall program goals and supporting objectives and plans to accomplish the goals. The importance of a concise, informative program summary cannot be overemphasized.

***Table of Contents***

A Table of Contents, itself unpaginated, should be placed immediately after the Program Summary Page. This table should direct the reader to the pages for all sections of the proposal, beginning with the Program Description on page 1.

***Program Description***

The application may not exceed 10 pages (whether single- or double-spaced) of written text and may not exceed a total of 40 pages, including attachments. The proposal should be assembled so that the Program Description immediately follows the Program Summary. To clarify page-limitation requirements, page numbering for the Program

Description should start with 1 and should be placed on the bottom of the page. All proposals are to be submitted on standard 8½” x 11” paper. In addition, margins must be at least 1 inch, type size must be 12 point (equivalent to this size for some printers is 10 pitch or 10 characters per inch, which is also acceptable), line count should be no more than six (6) lines per inch, and pages should not be reduced.

The program description must address the following components (see the evaluation criteria stated in Part III, Section C):

*(1) Approach and Program Plan*

A 5-year program plan should be included that discusses the kind of research activities that are needed to anticipate future policy debates on important food assistance and nutrition issues and the role of the proposed RIDGE Center in carrying out those activities. The plan should demonstrate the applicant’s grasp of the policy and research significance of past food assistance and nutrition analyses on which current and future studies may build upon to advance policy knowledge and the development and implementation of food assistance and nutrition programs. The applicant should describe approaches and tools (e.g., electronic mailing list management systems, web postings, hard copy mailings) to solicit research proposals to build research capacity and methods, such as panels, advisory committees, or other systems, to review and select proposed studies for RIDGE subawards.

*(2) Expanding the Research Base*

The proposal should (1) describe methods to attract experienced researchers to food and nutrition assistance research and (2) present a training and mentoring plan for emerging scholars that describes how new researchers will benefit from participation in the RIDGE Program, particularly the benefits provided by the RIDGE Center. The discussion should include the expected number and types of emerging scholars to be supported, the level of support anticipated, and methods to ensure diversity.

*(3) Dissemination of Findings*

The application must also include a detailed dissemination plan that describes the methods of disseminating RIDGE-supported analyses to interested parties through use of web-based technologies and various media including newsletters, working papers, special reports, and briefings.

*(4) Staffing and Organizational Plan*

The application must include a staffing and organizational proposal for the RIDGE Center, including an analysis of the types of background needed among staff members. The applicant shall identify the Center Director and key staff. Full

resumes (two-page maximum) of proposed staff members shall be included as a separate appendix to the application. The time commitment to the RIDGE Center and other existing commitments for the Director and each proposed staff member should be clearly indicated in chart form. Specific to the RIDGE Center Director, 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. The vitae shall be no more than two pages in length, excluding publications listings; and
- Publications List. A chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past 5 years, including those in press, must be provided for the RIDGE Center Director. Also list only those nonrefereed 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.

#### *(5) Budget Narrative*

The application's budget summary narrative must link the core management functions, research, mentoring, and dissemination program to the RIDGE Center for Food and Nutrition Assistance Research funding level. This section should discuss how the 5-year budget supports proposed research, training, and dissemination activities and should link the first-year funding to a 5-year plan. The discussion should include the appropriateness of the level and distribution of funds to the successful completion of the research, training, and dissemination plans. Also, the judicious use of funds is desired—i.e., to provide the highest level of funding for direct costs to researchers while containing indirect costs to institutions. Applications that address indirect cost containment will be viewed more favorably than those that do not.

#### ***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.

#### **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 Alex Majchrowicz, Economic Research Service, Food Economics Division, Room N2171, 1800 M Street, NW, 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 applications is September 15, 2009. Mailed applications shall be considered as meeting the announced deadline if they are either received or sent on or before the deadline date. Mailed applications postmarked after the closing date will be classified as late.

Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping consisting of one of the following: (1) a legibly dated postmark applied by the U. S. Postal Service; (2) a legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or (3) a dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier. Non-USPS-applied postage dating (i.e. dated postage meter stamps) do not constitute proof of the date of mailing.

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 using 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.

We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. We encourage 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 Daylight Savings 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 **September 15, 2009**.

**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 5 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 Checklist, which can be found at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/registration\\_checklist.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/registration_checklist.html).**

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 5 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 10 pages of written text and may not exceed a total of 40 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](mailto: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  
Fax: 202-694-5677  
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 (1) approve the application as a whole or in part, (2) disapprove the application, or (3) 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. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number**

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number is 10.255.

## **G. Checklist of a Complete Application**

Application for Federal Domestic Assistance Form (SF-424)

- Is all required information accurate and complete?
- Is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 10.255?
- Has the authorized organizational representative signed the SF-424?
- Is the CFDA Title: Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE)?
- Have you specified that you are applying for the "National" or "Targeted" RIDGE Center?
- Have you included a telephone number, fax number, and/or 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 \$250,000 for the program proposal?
- Is the budget duration within the stated 5 years?

## 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 institution of the RIDGE Center Director appear on the page or on the following page?
- Does the page include the total amount requested?
- Does the page include the 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 this section begin as page 1, 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?