

Healthy Eating Research: Special Call for COVID-19 Related Projects Focused on the Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Rapid-Response Funding Overview

There are two stages in the application process.

Stage 1: Letter of Intent

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis through July 1, 2020, or until all available funds have been commissioned. Interested applicants will need to first submit a letter of intent to HER by email (healthyeating@duke.edu) with the subject line: ATTN: COVID-19 Proposal. Applicants must submit: 1) a letter of intent following the template for studies or the template for briefs/papers; and 2) CVs or NIH biosketches for key personnel. Applicants will be contacted via email and informed of whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal on a rolling basis.

Stage 2: Full Proposals (if invited)

Selected Stage 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal narrative of up to 5 pages accompanied by detailed budget documents; templates and instructions will be provided if you are invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals must be submitted within four weeks of invitation. Proposals will undergo an initial screening for completeness and eligibility. Eligible proposals for small studies will then be sent out for peer-review. Award start dates will be determined in partnership with HER.

2) Eligibility

We have two distinct grant proposal ideas. Can we submit both? Is there any chance we could be funded for both?

Yes and yes. Your organization can apply for more than one grant through this funding opportunity. An investigator can also participate in more than one proposal. For example, an investigator might serve as the principal investigator on one proposal and a co-investigator on another proposal. The proposals will be reviewed independently. However, following the completed review period, we will also consider the uniqueness of the project in relation to the mix of potentially funded projects and geographic dispersion of grantees as we make our final funding decisions. It is rare that we will fund the same PI or project team for two small studies but it is feasible that the same PI or project team could be funded for a small study and an issue brief or review paper.

Can two organizations submit a joint proposal?

Yes, two organizations may submit a joint proposal. However, one organization must serve as the recipient of the grant from HER. The organization receiving the grant may choose to

establish a subcontract or consulting arrangement with the other organization(s). You will need to identify one principal investigator (PI) and you also may choose to name one co-principal investigator (Co-PI). There is no limit to the number of co-investigators. If the proposal is funded, the person listed as PI will have ultimate responsibility for the grant.

What types of organizations are eligible to receive a grant under this program?

Preference will be given to applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or Type III supporting organizations. Organizations that are not classified as 501(c)(3) organizations may be required to submit additional documentation, or complete additional reporting requirements if a grant is awarded.

Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. The focus of this program is the United States; studies in other countries will be considered only to the extent that they may directly inform U.S. policy. Governmental entities such as USDA, NIH, the Indian Health Service, and local public health departments may apply, although additional documentation may be required.

Will HER fund individuals? HER can fund individuals to write issue briefs, commentaries, papers or research reviews; however, we cannot fund individuals for small studies. Rather, the small study grants must be set up as a subaward from Duke University to the PI's institution.

Can an applicant organization be from outside the United States?

No. We do not award grants to organizations from outside the U.S. or its territories.

What types of projects will you fund and not fund?

- All studies must include a focus on USDA Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs serving children and families. The goal is to inform decision-making regarding innovative policies and/or programs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We are not interested in funding studies focused on individual nutrition education; however, we would consider studies that incorporate both policy, systems, and/or environmental change (PSE) strategies and nutrition education, especially in the case of SNAP-Ed or WIC as education is a component of these federal nutrition programs.
- We will not fund community demonstration projects and/or dissertation studies.

What experience or qualifications are required to be a principal investigator?

The experience and qualifications of the research team is one of the primary criteria for proposal review. A doctorate or other terminal degree (e.g., PhD, JD, MD) is not required, but is strongly preferred for the principal investigator. Research associates and postdoctoral researchers may serve as principal investigators on Healthy Eating Research grants. However, you should check your institution's policy regarding this, as some universities only allow faculty members to be principal investigators on grants. Keep in mind that studies may have co-PIs, and papers may have more than one author.

3) Proposal Content and Programmatic Questions

What are the differences between the various project types?

The primary difference between issue briefs/commentaries and papers/research reviews versus the small studies, is that the studies will involve new data collection or analyses, whereas the briefs/papers will cover already published data. Examples of past commissioned small studies, HER issue briefs, and review papers can be found [on the HER website](#). Review papers can be narrative reviews, systematic reviews or meta-analyses.

What topics are you most interested in for this funding opportunity?

This funding opportunity is focused on USDA Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs serving children and families. The goal is to inform decision-making regarding innovative policies and/or programs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that submitted proposals do not just explore the current landscape, but also highlight program and/or policy implications related to changes and modifications made in response to COVID-19 that could be used to strengthen the federal nutrition assistance programs after the pandemic. Consideration of geography, population density, ethnicity/race, and immigration status are key to understanding how policies and programs can be implemented and scaled-up during and after the pandemic to reduce pre-existing and emerging disparities in access to and availability of nutritious foods.

What age range are you most interested in for this special call?

We will fund projects that focus on children (ages 0 to 18) and their families, including pregnant women. We have a strong interest in young children ages 0 to 8 and their families.

Will proposals be given consideration even if they do not target lower-income or racial or ethnic minority communities?

Projects funded through this special call should consider the impact of COVID-19 and USDA Federal Nutrition Program changes on nutrition-related health equity issues. All projects must have the potential to impact groups at highest risk for poor health and well-being, and nutrition-related health disparities. If your population includes neither lower-income nor racial and ethnic minority children, you will need to specify clearly in your proposal how your results will be relevant to these high-risk groups.

Are there specific evaluation methods that are preferred?

No, the evaluation methods and the analysis will be driven by the research question. A variety of designs could be used, including observation and measurement studies, secondary data analyses, analyses of the effect of natural variations in food policies and environments, and evaluating current programs and policies. Survey research looking at associations or correlations also could be included. Mixed-design (qualitative and quantitative) studies are also welcome.

4) Budget and Co-Funding

Do I need to submit a budget with my proposal?

- Letter of Intent - Applicants should not submit a budget; rather provide only the total amount of funding requested.
- Invited Full Proposals - Invited full proposal applicants will need to complete detailed budget documents; templates and instructions will be provided if you are invited to submit a full proposal.

What can grant funds be used for?

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project.

In keeping with RWJF policy, grant funds may not be used to subsidize individuals for the costs of their health care, to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

What is the allowable indirect cost rate?

If invited to submit a full proposal for a study, the allowable indirect cost rate is 12 percent. The indicated award maximum for a study (up to \$50,000) includes both direct and indirect costs. Issue briefs, commentaries, papers or research reviews will be awarded a flat fee for the final deliverable; a detailed budget with indirect costs will not be required.

I would like to apply for funds to build onto an existing grant. What information do I need to provide?

Describe the existing study in the Letter of Intent and, if invited, in the full proposal narrative. We will need to know the scope of the existing study, its funding level, the funding source(s), and the ways in which your proposal will leverage or supplement existing funding.

What if I am seeking additional support from other funders or I have already secured additional support from other funders?

If additional funding will be sought or required for the project you propose, please specify the source(s), amount, and uses of that funding in the budget. If you cannot provide documentation of an anticipated award, then indicate in your application materials the status of your requests to other funders. You also should indicate how critical the other funding will be to the success of the proposed project. Finalist applicants may be asked in the future to provide additional documentation about the status of their requests to other funders.