

# Healthy Eating Research: Special Call for Rapid-Response Projects

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) Rapid-Response Funding Overview

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis until all available funds have been commissioned. Interested applicants will need to submit a proposal to HER by email ([healthyeating@duke.edu](mailto:healthyeating@duke.edu)) with the subject line: ATTN: Rapid-Response Proposal.

Proposals will undergo an initial screening for completeness and eligibility. All proposals will then be reviewed by the HER Program Director and Deputy Director. Applicants will be contacted via email and informed of the funding decision within four weeks of submission. Award start dates will be determined in partnership with HER.

#### Small Studies

Small study applicants are required to submit a proposal narrative of up to 5 pages, a work plan, and detailed budget documents at the time of application. Applicants must also attach the CV or NIH biosketch of the PI or co-PIs only.

#### Issue Briefs/Papers

Issue brief/paper applicants are required to submit a brief narrative of up to 2 pages. Applicants must also attach the CV or NIH biosketch of the PI or co-PIs only. Issue brief/paper applicants are not required to submit a detailed budget worksheet as part of the proposal submission. This type of project is a deliverable-based payment. If funded, the HER team will provide more details on the budget documents/payments for this type of project.

NOTE: Templates for all required materials are available on the [HER website](#).

### 2) Eligibility

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

Your organization can apply for more than one grant through the funding opportunity described in this CFP. The proposals will be reviewed independently; however, when making final funding decisions, we will also consider the uniqueness of the project in relation to the mix of potentially funded projects and geographic dispersion of grantees. It is rare that we will fund the same PI or project team for two grants.

#### **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; this is the lead organization. The lead organization may choose to establish a subcontract or consulting arrangement with the other organization(s). You will need to identify one principal investigator (PI) based at the lead organization 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 at the lead institution 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. *Healthy Eating Research* may require additional documentation from organizations not meeting these criteria. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.

### **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 setup as a subaward from Duke University to the PI's institution.

### **What types of projects will you fund and not fund?**

- All proposed studies must have a clear impact on children and families or young adults in the U.S. and have the potential to reduce inequities related to health and well-being.
- Studies must have a link to nutrition, diet quality, weight, or food insecurity, but can also include other health indicators.
- Studies must have a clear, data-driven, and testable research question with a rigorous study design.
- We are not interested in funding projects focused on individual nutrition education; however, we would consider projects 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 dissertation studies.

### **What research expertise are you looking for in an investigator?**

Research expertise should include a strong knowledge of formulating research hypotheses, crafting an appropriate study design and methodology, analyzing and reporting on the findings, and then communicating and translating these findings to relevant audiences. It is important for the research team to have a track record in policy-related research. It is also expected that the research team includes individuals with relevant content expertise.

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?**

Small studies typically 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 Call for Proposals aims to fund solution-oriented research studies, strategic policy-relevant reports/commentaries, and evaluations of time-sensitive programs and policy changes.

Specifically, we are interested in understanding how recent changes (i.e., occurring since the beginning of 2025) to nutrition policies and programs at the federal, state, and local levels impact health and nutrition outcomes among lower-income and families of color. We are also interested in social, health, and economic programs and policies that are non-food related, such as cuts to Medicaid or public health infrastructure, and how these changes may impact diet quality, nutrition and food security, and weight.

Evidence generated through this special solicitation should be timely and policy relevant. It is important that submitted proposals do not just explore the current landscape but highlight implications of program, policy, and budget changes under the current administration.

Some examples of possible research topics include, but are not limited to:

- Evaluation of state-level waivers for SNAP restrictions of unhealthy foods, such as sugary beverages and candy.
- Impacts of cuts to federal nutrition programs (i.e., school meals, CACFP, SNAP, and WIC) on:
  - program reach and/or participation;
  - food insecurity, nutrition, and health outcomes; and
  - program implementation, such as administrative burdens and retailer perspectives.
- Explore the impacts of tariffs on food prices and food purchases.
- Examine state and local government responses and actions to federal cuts or waivers in nutrition assistance programs.
- Assess the effects of immigration-related policies on participation in nutrition assistance programs among eligible children in mixed-status households.
- Examine the potential impacts on federal nutrition assistance programs of adopting 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans that differ from those proposed by the DGA Committee.
- Explore industry responses to policy changes at the federal and state levels, including effects of voluntary and mandatory changes to food labeling, dyes, and additives.

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

The target population is children (0-18 years) and young adults (19-25 years) in the United States, with high priority on those who are at highest risk for poor nutrition, obesity, and food insecurity.

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

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 does not include a focus on children/families with limited incomes or racially and ethnically diverse populations, it may not be eligible for funding under this special CFP.

**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?**

Applicants submitting a small study proposal are required to submit budget documents. Templates and instructions are provided on the [Current Funding Opportunities](#) page of the HER website. Applicants submitting a brief/paper proposal are not required to submit additional budget documents, as these are fixed price awards.

**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?**

Indirect costs are included in the total amount of the award. RWJF's current allowable indirect cost rate varies by institution:

- 15 percent for U.S. colleges/universities and hospital or health systems,
- 30 percent for nonprofit organizations, and
- 0 percent for for-profit organizations and government entities.

If consultants/contractor costs (i.e., sub-contracts or sub-grants) constitute more than one-third of the total direct costs of the project or program, the allowable indirect cost rate on those third-party costs is limited to 5 percent.

The maximum indirect cost rates apply to both the primary applicant organization and any sub-grantee or sub-contractor costs up to the rate applicable to their organization type. For example: if a U.S. university is the primary grantee and has a U.S.-based nonprofit organization as a sub-grantee, the U.S. university is eligible to receive a 15 percent indirect cost rate, while the U.S.-based nonprofit organization is eligible to receive a 30 percent rate. Similarly, if a U.S. nonprofit organization is the primary grantee and a for-profit organization is a subcontractor, the U.S. nonprofit organization may receive a 30 percent indirect cost rate, while the for-profit subcontractor may not apply indirect costs (0%).

**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 proposal narrative, its funding level, the funding source(s), and the ways in which your proposal will leverage or supplement existing funding. The HER team may request additional details regarding the existing study during the grant review process.

**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.