

2025 Call for Proposals

Healthy Eating Research: Special Call for Rapid-Response Projects

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Good nutrition is a cornerstone of health and well-being throughout the lifespan, and it is foundational during childhood and adolescence. In recent months, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has eliminated billions of dollars in government spending on public health programs and proposed significant changes to nutrition programs, such as school meals, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and WIC. These disinvestments in children’s health threaten millions of families in the United States, especially low-income households and communities of color. [The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) estimates that the administration’s combination of program cuts and tariffs will hurt most families across the U.S. by making it more difficult for them to buy groceries and other everyday goods, while also reducing their access to assistance programs. As a result, millions of children and families may face hunger and have poorer quality diets, with serious consequences for their overall health and well-being.

In May 2025, the House of Representatives passed a Budget Reconciliation bill, the “[One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#),” which includes roughly \$300 billion in cuts to SNAP and \$700 billion in cuts to Medicaid. The SNAP cuts will reduce benefits (by as much as \$1.40 per day), restrict eligibility (e.g., the work requirement for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) will expand, impacting an estimated 3 to 3.5 million people), and shift some program costs to states. Use of SNAP varies across states, ranging from 5% of households in Utah to 23% of households in New Mexico; as a result, many states will be highly impacted by shifting program costs. Other proposed cuts could reduce access to school meals for children and affect WIC program eligibility (due to changes in SNAP and Medicaid participation). In addition, state budgets, local economies, food retailers, and food banks could face important challenges because of these program changes.

Little is known about the immediate and lasting impacts of such large policy and program changes on health. Furthermore, recent significant federal workforce reduction and the removal of critical federal data sources suggest that government-supported monitoring and evaluation efforts of these changes are not likely. The current context provides an important opportunity to strengthen the evidence base, especially as large-scale government investments in research are being rolled back, or in some cases, eliminated.

HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH PROGRAM

Healthy Eating Research’s (HER) mission is to support and disseminate research on policy, systems, and environmental strategies that promote healthy eating among children and advance nutrition and health equity. The program goals are to:

- 1) build a research base for policy, systems, and environmental strategies that advance health and nutrition equity in the areas of healthy food access and security, diet quality, and healthy weight;
- 2) foster a vibrant, inclusive, interdisciplinary field of research and a diverse network of researchers; and
- 3) communicate research findings to accelerate policy, systems, and environmental changes that promote healthy eating and advance nutrition and health equity.

HER issues calls for proposals to solicit scientifically rigorous, solution-oriented proposals from investigators representing diverse disciplines and backgrounds. To learn more about the program, applicants are encouraged to visit the Healthy Eating Research website at www.healthyeatingresearch.org.

This Call for Proposals (CFP) aims to fund solution-oriented research studies, strategic policy-relevant reports, and evaluations of time-sensitive programs and policy changes. Specifically, we are interested in understanding how changes to nutrition policies and programs at the federal, state, and local levels impact nutrition, health, and economic outcomes among diverse families living with limited incomes. We are also interested in non-food related social, health, and economic programs and policies, 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. A brief description of topics of interest, as well as study parameters are below.

TARGET AGE GROUPS, PRIORITY POPULATIONS, AND TOPIC AREAS

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. This includes families with low and middle incomes, and racially and ethnically diverse populations (e.g., Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander).

Proposals should focus on a specific program or policy change. Some examples of 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) and program changes (i.e., work requirements) on:
 - program reach and/or participation;
 - food insecurity, nutrition, health, and/or economic outcomes; and
 - program implementation, such as administrative burdens and retailer perspectives.
- Impacts of tariffs on food prices and food purchases.
- State and local government responses and actions to federal cuts or waivers in nutrition assistance programs, including effects of shifting financial responsibility to states.
- Effects of immigration-related policies on participation in nutrition assistance programs among eligible children in mixed-status households.
- Potential impacts on federal nutrition assistance programs of adopting 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans that differ from those proposed by the DGA Scientific Committee.
- Industry responses to policy changes at the federal and state levels, including effects of voluntary and mandatory changes to food labeling, dyes, and additives.

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. A variety of research designs and analyses, including mixed methods, linkages of existing data sources, and legal analyses, can be used to answer research questions.

TOTAL AWARDS

Approximately \$200,000 (total) will be awarded to support rapid-response research projects, with each award up to a maximum of \$50,000 and 10 months in duration. The following types of proposals will be accepted:

1. Issue Briefs and Papers/Research Reviews:
 - *Issue Briefs or Policy Analyses*: Each award will be for up to \$3,000 and for a maximum of 4-6 months. These products are often HER-branded and intended to distill existing research into an easily digestible format for an advocate or policymaker audience.
 - *Papers or Research Reviews*: Each award will be for \$5,000-\$8,000 and for a maximum of 6 months. These products may be a peer-reviewed manuscript or HER-branded research review.
2. Small Studies: Each award will be for up to \$50,000 and for a maximum of 10 months to ensure we are providing timely and relevant information. Researchers are encouraged to submit smaller projects (i.e., lower in budget and/or shorter in duration).

Examples of each product type may be found on the [HER website](#). The primary difference between issue briefs/policy analyses 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.

HOW TO APPLY

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis until all available funds have been commissioned. All applicants must submit a proposal to HER by email (healthyeating@duke.edu) with the subject line: ATTN: Rapid-Response Proposal. The proposal should follow either the template for studies or the template for briefs/papers, which are available on [HER's website](#). Applicants submitting a proposal for a small study are required to submit budget materials (budget templates are also available on HER's website). Selected small studies will be sent out for peer review.

For more information about application requirements, eligibility, and proposal content, please visit the [FAQ document](#) on our website. The HER team does not have the capacity to discuss individual proposal ideas prior to submission. If you have logistical questions that are not answered in the FAQ document, please direct them to healthyeating@duke.edu.