



Rooted in Evidence

A Food Bank Grant and Evaluation Program of the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition

Request for Proposals 2021

Applications Due: April 16, 2021, 5 p.m. CDT

BACKGROUND

The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN) is pleased to release the Request for Proposals (RFP) for its second round of the Rooted in Evidence Food Bank Evaluation and Grant Program (herein referred to as “Rooted in Evidence”). Rooted in Evidence is an opportunity for selected food banks and their partners to enhance measurement and evaluation related to their programming. In addition, this program will provide funding for innovative and dynamic programming to improve the health and dietary quality of emergency food recipients. A highlight of this opportunity is to work in partnership with GSCN to conduct a robust evaluation of the grant activities in order to better understand the impact of funded projects and to create meaningful communication pieces. The overarching goal of this RFP is to strengthen the skills and competency of funded organizations to effectively evaluate the impact of their programming and share findings with their communities.

The [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#) (GSCN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Omaha, Nebraska, established in 1973 with a focus on research and evaluation related to food insecurity, healthy eating active living, and health equity. GSCN specializes in both process and outcome evaluation, including the development and implementation of quantitative (e.g., survey) and qualitative (e.g., interview, focus groups) approaches, measurement development, and statistical analysis. GSCN works collaboratively with partners to design feasible, yet rigorous, study designs, along with developing complementary high-quality reports and other communication deliverables. Through Rooted in Evidence, grantee food banks can expect to work collaboratively to design and implement a high-quality project and accompanying evaluation that will yield meaningful data and information to share with partners and leverage future funding.

WHAT WE AIM TO FUND

Since the focus of Rooted in Evidence is to enhance evaluation and dissemination capacity, we anticipate that food banks will allocate dedicated staff time for communication and collaboration with GSCN through virtual trainings and technical assistance, data collection and management activities, and reporting. It is highly recommended that food bank applicants partner with a local researcher/evaluator/graduate student to assist in the development of their evaluation plans and to help with data collection efforts if their internal staff has limited experience with evaluation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that applicants consider the feasibility of proposed programming and evaluation activities, particularly giving thought to activities that adhere to social distancing and public health guidelines. For example, proposed data collection activities can occur via internet or phone surveys rather than in person data collection.

GSCN intends to fund innovative and dynamic programming and/or initiatives that seek to improve dietary quality among food pantry and food bank clients. Applicants should consider basing their proposal around evaluation efforts of a program that is either novel (i.e., not commonly done by food banks) or has an innovative twist. For example, while many food banks have Backpack programs, an innovative change to this program could be working with a new partner or taking a novel approach to delivery, such as working with a local Head Start to provide fresh

fruits and vegetables to participants. Additionally, these approaches could include existing or new/adapted programming that may include various:

- Settings and distribution sites (e.g., mobile or other “pop-up” pantries, college campuses, schools, child care settings, traditional pantries, clinics, including FQHCs).
- Components or levels of the emergency food system (e.g., distribution, procurement, food environment, client interactions to target knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to promote healthy eating).
- Target populations (e.g., children, adults, families, seniors, ethnic/racial minorities, new American/immigrant populations, college students, staff/volunteers, cancer survivors or other disease conditions, urban/rural).

Specific components of the RFP are outlined in the following sections. This is a competitive process, and grants will be awarded based on criteria detailed in the RFP instructions. Individual grants of up to \$25,000 will be available for up to four food banks. Grants will occur over a 16-month timeline, beginning June 1, 2021, and ending September 30, 2022. This 16-month timeline will include a 2-month planning phase, an 11-month implementation phase, and a 3-month dissemination phase which includes the creation of a final report as well as community or organization-level documents such as one-pagers, pamphlets, or a press release.

To be eligible for funding, organizations must meet the following criteria:

- Non-profit 501(c)(3) food bank organizations or networks of food pantries in the U.S. are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply. For purposes of this RFP, a food bank is defined as an organization that sources and stores food that will be directly distributed to individuals or distributed to partner agencies, such as community food pantries. Food pantries are encouraged to collaborate on proposals, but the primary applicant must be a food bank organization. Food rescue and gleaning organizations are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants must propose programming, policies, and/or practices that are innovative and dynamic which aim to improve the health and dietary quality of emergency food recipients in partnership with pantries or another distribution/client serving setting. We are interested in funding new/adapted programming that will benefit from a robust evaluation that will be conducted in collaboration with the GSCN team. We intend to give preference to those projects proposing participant-level data collection and proposed evaluations that include at least 150 participants in their sample and are of pre/post design. For example, the evaluations would include a group of participants who have not received the programming (pre) who will then be evaluated after receiving the programming (post).
- Active participation in data collection in partnership with GSCN is required. This means that there should be dedicated staff time (in-kind, matching/leveraged funds, or within the budget) in order to help facilitate data collection and management. It is highly encouraged that applicants partner with a research partner and/or academic institution (e.g., university). The nature of this partnership is to be equitable in responsibilities of participating in grant program, evaluation, and programming activities. This means that we anticipate that research partners and grantee organization will participate in virtual trainings and technical assistance together. Data will be co-owned by GSCN and the grantee organization.
- Active participation and coordination with the GSCN marketing team is also required. This means some dedicated staff time from a team member at any level as appropriate from the applicant organization (e.g., marketing personnel, executive director, program manager). Marketing or communications team participation will help to provide connection with local media outlets and assistance with grant promotion at a local level (e.g., provide promotional content such as human-interest stories; help disseminate information; provide promotional content as needed for website, social media, newsletter). Some of these marketing activities may include: copywriting, sharing of short videos or photography, and participation in 3-5 calls with the GSCN marketing team.

For more information, please refer to the table on the following page summarizing “What GSCN will provide” and expectations for “What food bank grantees will provide.” A large component of Rooted in Evidence is to help build capacity for evaluation and reporting for grantee organizations. We will be intentional and not overly burdensome with meetings or requests and anticipate that the grant program will be a useful and eventful learning experience. These meetings will also be an opportunity to interact with peer grantees and build capacity via peer-to-peer learning. Please note that **attendance of virtual capacity building trainings (approximately 10) and check-ins (ad hoc) with GSCN staff are required.** Additionally, dependent on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, **all grantees will be required to attend**

an in-person meeting in Omaha, NE (and should be budgeted for in the grant) during the last phase of the grant program to share findings and lessons learned with the grant program team and peer grantee organizations.

What GSCN will provide	What food bank grantees will provide
Measurement and evaluation support (e.g., training, technical assistance, guidance, measurement tool recommendation, data collection tools, analysis, interpretation of results, dissemination).	Active participation in virtual training opportunities and evaluation planning-based homework activities (e.g., developing evaluation questions).
Marketing expertise and resources (e.g., copywriting, logos, strategy, and technical assistance to develop story ideas/pitching to media, slide decks, infographics, social media activity).	Staff time for coordination with the GSCN marketing team and provision of requested materials.
Coordination of Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. This will ensure that results from the funded projects will follow ethics guidelines and be eligible for publication and other dissemination.	Coordination with GSCN staff for Institutional Review Board application. This may require research ethics and compliance training for those involved with data collection.
Analysis of quantitative data and training in the interpretation of qualitative data.	Staff or volunteer time for data collection on the proposed project and sharing of data with GSCN.
Potential contribution to manuscript preparation through review and co-authorship.	Potential development of peer-reviewed manuscript(s) reporting key findings from grantees' projects.
Any data collected through this funding opportunity will be owned by both GSCN and the grantee food bank organization.	
There may be the opportunity beyond grant terms for scientific and other broader field dissemination of results through publications, presentations at conferences, etc. Grantees can help serve as "ambassadors" for their programs, extending the reach of funded programming for a larger impact. (There may be an opportunity for some funding to support these activities.)	

** Note: We will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that describes all of these activities and commitments.*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

March 8, 2021

RFP released

March 22, 2021

Applicants submit questions to rootedinevidence@centerfornutrition.org by this date.

Responses to questions will be posted within a week on the grant program's website page at

<https://www.centerfornutrition.org/rootedinevidence> and applicants will be notified.

April 1, 2021 (5 p.m. CDT)

Deadline for receipt of Intent to Submit statement. Applicants are encouraged to send GSCN a brief statement outlining their intention to submit a proposal. This will be a non-binding statement sent via email to rootedinevidence@centerfornutrition.org stating an applicant's intent to submit a proposal. If an applicant does not submit an Intent to Submit Statement, they are still able to submit a full proposal.

April 16, 2021 (5 p.m. CDT)

Deadline for receipt of proposal via email to rootedinevidence@centerfornutrition.org

May 24, 2021

Applicants notified of funding recommendations.

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES (Continued)

June 1 – July 31, 2021

Grant planning period

August 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Grant implementation period

July 1 – September 30, 2022

Grant dissemination period

In-person final meeting in Omaha, NE

RFP INSTRUCTIONS

All proposals must be prepared in the format requested and emailed as a single, complete PDF to rootedinevidence@centerfornutrition.org with the subject line “Rooted in Evidence Proposal.” To be considered for review, **complete proposals must be submitted by 5 p.m. CDT on Friday, April 16, 2021.** No late proposals will be accepted. Incomplete proposals will not be considered for review.

Required components for the RFP are outlined in the following pages, and final proposals should be **no longer than 12 pages, 1.5 spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins, using the section headings and sub-headings described below.**

The RFP is divided into four sections:

Section 1: Organizational Information

Section 2: Fiscal/Budget Manager Information

Section 3: Project Narrative

Section 4: Budget and Disbursement Timeline

For questions regarding the RFP instructions, proposal criteria, and deadlines, please contact Ms. Katie Stern:

rootedinevidence@centerfornutrition.org or (531) 895-4037. Responses to questions sent before March 22, 2021, will be compiled and posted online on the grant program’s website page at

<https://www.centerfornutrition.org/rootedinevidence>.

SECTION 1: ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Organizational Background

In one or two paragraphs, briefly describe your organization (i.e., mission, geographic reach, population you serve) and the programming you provide either directly to clients or through pantries or other sites within your network that are relevant to this proposal. Please only reference those activities that are relevant to this proposal. List geographic locations (e.g., counties, cities) where you have pantries (or other sites) in your network/service area where grant activities will take place. Please also describe any efforts your organization has made focusing on the healthfulness of the foods your food bank distributes, nutrition education, and any goals for the future within these areas.

Summary

In one paragraph, briefly describe what you are aiming to fund with this grant program including the specific programming and what you hope to gain from performing an evaluation including what you would like to know about its impact or areas for improvement.

Primary Contact (This person will be the main contact for grant-related activities at your organization.)

Please provide the name, title/position, mailing address, physical address (if different from mailing address), email,

and phone number of the primary contact for this grant if awarded.

Key Project Staff (List key staff who will be associated with grant-related activities at your organization.)

Please provide names, job titles, organizational affiliations, and location of the organization for each of the individuals who will have a key role in the project (including any volunteers or interns).

Total Amount Requested

Please provide the total budget requested which may be up to \$25,000.

Section 2: FISCAL / BUDGET MANAGER INFORMATION

Fiscal Agent

Please provide the name and contact information for the organization that would receive the funds. (Note: The primary grant recipient must be a food bank, but may work with pantries and other sites which can be included as collaborators/sub-awardees.)

Budget Manager

Please provide the contact information for the person who will be managing the grant budget. This should be the person(s) who will receive funds and be responsible for fiscal aspects of the grant. Please provide their name, title or position, mailing address, physical address (if different from mailing address), email, and phone number.

Section 3: PROJECT NARRATIVE

A. Background

- Please provide a description of previous experience with innovative programming, if applicable. If you have previously conducted any work that aimed to increase the dietary quality and health among the clients you serve, briefly describe these projects, outcomes achieved, and any other relevant details.
- Describe the target population and geographic region the programming in this proposal will reach. Be specific, including relevant socio-demographics (e.g., age range, race, ethnicity, income, education, urban and/or rural), any specific target populations (e.g., children, adults, families, seniors, college students, staff/volunteers, cancer survivors or other disease conditions), and the rationale for selecting the population and geographic region.
- Describe the need for innovative programming among the target population.
- Describe the potential impact/significance of your proposed activities. Provide a description of how this proposal introduces new or different approaches or improves upon or leverages previous work done by your organization to yield a greater impact on the target population.

B. Need for Evaluation

- Describe any specific needs your organization has, and how you could benefit from enhanced capacity in evaluation efforts. In addition, please describe what parts of conducting an evaluation you would like the most help with. Activities may include: developing a comprehensive evaluation plan, creating meaningful evaluation questions, choosing appropriate surveys or other measurement tools, data collection processes, and interpreting data and findings.
- Describe your organization's current capacity to conduct evaluation activities (e.g., staff that focus on evaluation efforts, existing and ongoing evaluation studies). We are trying to determine the level of support needed for your project's evaluation, but will not grade your organization on this capacity during reviews. If applicable, please describe if you plan to work with a research partner and/or academic institution (e.g., university) and include the following: history of the relationship (i.e., if you have worked with them in the past), how you plan to work alongside each other, acknowledgement of joint participation in virtual trainings and technical assistance opportunities, and roles and responsibilities.

C. General Project Approach

- Provide a detailed description of your proposed project using *clear and concise* language. We encourage using the previously outlined grant program phases of: planning, implementation, and dissemination. Include project milestones that will be accomplished over the grant period.
- State overall project goals for your programming and its evaluation (i.e., what you hope to fulfill with your programming and evaluation activities).
- Describe how you intend to reach, recruit, and engage participants for the proposed activities. Participants can be food bank and/or pantry staff, volunteers, clients, or any other population. Additionally, describe how you will ensure social distancing and guidelines for public health safety will be maintained.
- Describe how you would plan to evaluate this project and what you hope to learn through evaluation activities about your programming. (Note: You will not be scored on this as GSCN will work in partnership with your team to design an appropriate evaluation. This is just a tentative plan.) Please describe which personnel will work alongside GSCN. We are interested to see how your project outcomes and goals align with other applicants and determine the needs for evaluation moving forward.

D. Project Team and Organizational Capacity

- Using the key project staff identified in Section 1, describe their main responsibilities for project implementation and their expertise or experience for that role. If you intend to use temporary staff or volunteers, please describe the anticipated experiences and roles these individuals may play.
- Clearly describe how the project team will internally communicate and coordinate activities to accomplish proposed aims/goals. If collaborating with other community agencies or academic institutions be sure to include how this partnership will look, highlighting keys to a successful partnership.
- Describe who will primarily be in charge of working in partnership with GSCN on evaluation and marketing. Please include all team members' experience/capacity to carry out the proposed activities. It is recommended that more than one person be involved in grant program activities.
- Describe your organization's capacity and plans to communicate the project to external audiences (e.g., local media, social media, newsletters). (Note: As noted above for evaluation, you will not be scored on this, as GSCN will work in partnership with your team. This is just a tentative plan.)

E. Capacity Building

- Provide a brief statement explaining how participating in the Rooted in Evidence grant program will help build capacity to evaluate food bank programming into the future. Describe how increased knowledge and ability to perform evaluations will impact your organization and the impacted populations in your community.
- Provide a statement indicating your understanding and willingness to work in partnership with GSCN in terms of overall program planning, evaluation, and marketing as part of this opportunity, if funded. Briefly describe the current capacity of your project team to carry out various aspects of the proposed project activities and areas where technical assistance may be needed.

Section 4: Budget and Disbursement Timeline

Please note the following rules regarding budget:

- Funds will be released in two payments (\$18,000 in June 2021 and \$7,000 (remainder) in September 2022 (end of grant period). This may be modified on a case-by-case basis with GSCN, however, organizations making such a request will need to provide detailed justification for the request.
- Request for indirect costs is limited to 10% of the total budget and must be included in the \$25,000.

Please note the following rules regarding allowable costs:

- Up to \$5,000 of the award may be used to directly purchase food. This food must be fresh fruits and/or vegetables.
- Funding may not be used for construction or large equipment purchases.

Budget

Provide a detailed budget for funding requested using the budget template at the end of the RFP. There are limited allocations pertaining to the budget as outlined below.

Budget Justification

For the major categories included in your budget request, provide a brief justification for the item and description of how it relates to project implementation.

Salary and Benefits

For each staff member funded through this grant, provide the estimated percent of time that will be spent on grant activities and briefly describe their responsibilities in grant implementation. Please also indicate any in-kind/volunteer time (i.e., for staff or volunteers who would be on this project; this could include, but is not limited to: project manager, interns, volunteers, marketing, executive director).

Project Materials

Provide a brief justification for the item(s) and how they will be used in the project.

Participant Incentives

Provide a brief description of any incentives that will be needed for the project.

Training and Education

Provide a brief description of the training and education, estimated expenses, and how they relate to the grant project.

Travel

Provide a brief description of travel needs/expenses and how they relate to project implementation. Allow for up to \$1,200 for air, lodging, ground transportation, and food to cover a representative to attend the in-person meeting in Omaha, Nebraska. If the in-person meeting is scheduled when there are still risks involved with travel due to COVID-19, this money can be reallocated back into programming and/or evaluation activities.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are limited to no more than 10% of the total budget. Provide a brief description of the items and justification of indirect costs.

Proposal Review and Award Criteria

The strength of the proposal will be evaluated based on the criteria described above and the overall purpose of Rooted in Evidence. Depending on the review process, we may follow up with questions or request to arrange a call for points of clarification in order to inform our selection of grantees.

Grant Budget Template

Agency Name: _____

Project Name: _____

EXPENSES		Requested from GSCN	In-Kind Support from Applicant
Personnel	FTE		
Salaries (list positions and % FTE as allocated on this project)			
		\$0	
		\$0	
		\$0	
Payroll Taxes/Benefits (specify)			
		\$0	
		\$0	
		\$0	
Subtotal Personnel		\$0	
Operating			
Project Materials		\$0	
<i>(Supplies and materials necessary for project)</i>			
Participant Incentives		\$0	
Training & Education		\$0	
<i>(Professional development, travel, educational materials)</i>			
Consulting		\$0	
<i>(Expert support for project deliverables)</i>			
Name of Consultant:			
Scope of Work:			
Name of Consultant:			
Scope of Work:			
Travel		\$0	
<i>(Mileage, related travel expenses)</i>			
Indirect Costs		\$0	
<i>Not to exceed 10% of total budget</i>			
Total Project Cost		\$0	