



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 23 2015

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 141 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 added a new Section 23 to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. 1769d, establishing and providing substantial new mandatory funding to research the causes and consequences of, as well as test innovative strategies to end, childhood hunger and food insecurity.

Section 23 (b), 42 U.S.C 1769d, authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out demonstration projects to end childhood hunger, and provided \$40 million for this purpose. The funds were made available beginning on October 1, 2012, and will remain available until September 30, 2017. The Secretary is required to undertake independent evaluation of each demonstration project, using rigorous experimental designs and methodologies to produce scientifically valid evidence of project impacts on food security. Additionally, at least one demonstration project must take place in a rural Indian Tribal Organization where the prevalence of diabetes is at least 15 percent.

Finally, the Secretary was directed to submit a report by the end of December each year to the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate describing the status of each demonstration project and the results of any evaluations of the demonstration projects completed during the previous fiscal year. This letter serves as the report on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) activities to date.

Accomplishments

Informed by consultations between USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Department of Education, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released the Request for Applications on March 20, 2014. Applications were due on July 7, 2014. A technical review panel was convened and completed their review of the applications in August 2014. The agency expects to announce the grantees in early 2015.

Evaluation Overview

To ensure a rigorous evaluation of each demonstration project, FNS prepared a solicitation package to select an independent contractor to carry out the evaluation. This Request for



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Proposals was posted on June 25, 2014. The contract was awarded to Mathematica Policy Research on September 25, 2014, for the period of performance beginning October 1, 2014, and ending November 30, 2018. The comprehensive evaluation includes technical assistance to grantees regarding the evaluation, implementation and cost studies, and estimates of impacts on food security and other outcomes based on surveying households. The evaluation also includes focus groups and in-depth interviews with participants to learn about their experiences with the demonstration project. Since FNS awarded the contract and held a start-up meeting, the evaluation team has focused on technical review of grantee applications, leading to a draft memorandum with recommendations to strengthen the evaluation designs and/or interventions. The team has also delivered draft materials for a grantee meeting to be held in early 2015, a draft and final 60-day Federal Register notice regarding data collection, and plans for the development and submission of the Office of Management and Budget Information Collection Request package.

If you have any questions about this report, please have a member of your staff contact Todd Batta, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Senator Debbie Stabenow, Senator Pat Roberts, Congressman Collin Peterson, Congressman John Kline, and Congressman Robert Scott.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary