



## REQUEST FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION CONTRACT PROPOSALS

FoodCorps School Food Environment and Lunchroom Consumption Project

**Application period closes Friday, August 29, 2014**

### **About FoodCorps**

FoodCorps is a national service organization that seeks to give all children the opportunity to grow up in a vibrant, healthful food environment. Through our partnership with AmeriCorps, we recruit, train and place emerging leaders into limited-resource schools for a year of service implementing our three-ingredient recipe for healthy kids:

- *Knowledge* – We teach hands-on lessons about food and nutrition;
- *Engagement* – We build and tend school gardens and teach cooking lessons so kids can taste the fresh food they've grown;
- *Access* – We change what's on children's lunch trays, giving them healthy food from local farms.

FoodCorps envisions a future in which all our nation's children know what healthy food is, care where it comes from, and have access to it every day. When our work is done, future generations will grow up enveloped in a healthy school food environment—and will go on to lead healthier, more productive, and longer lives. In each state where we operate, FoodCorps identifies a lead partner (host site) to coordinate our efforts across the state. In collaboration with those state partners, community organizations (service sites) within each of those states support and oversee one or more FoodCorps AmeriCorps members throughout their year of service. Service sites may be local non-profit organizations, university extension programs, or schools/school districts themselves, for example. Throughout their one year term, FoodCorps service members partner primarily with local schools to provide indoor- and garden-based food education, build and tend school gardens, and work to promote healthy food for school lunch menus. Our 2014-2015 class of 180+ service members will be embedded in over 140 communities and 400+ schools in 17 states across the country.

### **Evaluation Purpose and Scope**

FoodCorps seeks proposals from experienced researchers and evaluators for a two-year project to collaborate on instrument development as well as assess FoodCorps' impact related to the key outcomes of our program: *(1) The contractor will work with FoodCorps to refine our existing farm to school-focused school food environment assessment and implementation rubric. (2) The contractor will also assess the influence our school-based programming (from classes to school-wide environmental changes) has on children's consumption of healthy food during school meals. As a whole, we seek a study designed to assess impacts of a multi-component, holistic farm to school program.*

Over the past two years, FoodCorps has developed and piloted an internal healthy school food environment rubric (currently called the "FoodCorps Landscape Assessment"), which captures change over

time across FoodCorps' three pillars of farm to school programming at participating schools. The instrument rates a school environment across 30 environmental and programmatic features that contribute to creating a healthy food environment. FoodCorps service members along with a group of key stakeholders conduct the pre/post assessment at each school site. As such, it has the ability to track program implementation and key changes at each school over time. FoodCorps is interested in partnering with evaluators or researchers that will provide expertise in environmental assessment, with an aim toward strengthening and validating the instrument. We seek researchers and evaluators to further develop this instrument and to subsequently analyze whether there is a relationship between the state of the school food environment and student food consumption at school.

The contractors will assess student food consumption behavior at FoodCorps schools that implement a full suite of farm to school programming (across all three pillars of FoodCorps: knowledge, engagement, and access, as described above). The evaluation will also assess and compare these findings to appropriately matched non-FoodCorps schools, with the purpose of comparing food consumption at intervention schools to school food consumption in the absence of the FoodCorps program.

### **Evaluation Questions**

FoodCorps seeks to understand the impact of its programming on individual child behavior as well as on school food environments over time. The key evaluation topics are listed below, with the expectation that the applicant will refine the questions based on collaboration with a group of FoodCorps staff and stakeholders.

1. How can we best measure school food environment change through a farm to school lens, using FoodCorps' Landscape Assessment tool as a starting point? What updates should be made to strengthen the tool and further ground it in best practice and research?
2. Do students who participate in the FoodCorps program consume more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; fewer saturated fats; and a greater overall variety of foods at school than students who not participate in the FoodCorps program (either from the same school or from non-FoodCorps schools)?
3. Does the extent of a school's adoption of a healthy school food environment, as measured by the Landscape Assessment or a similar tool, play a role in student food consumption?

To answer these primary evaluation questions, the evaluation will measure (a) the type and amount of food consumed by students in a cafeteria setting (for example, through visual estimation plate waste analysis), and (b) the health of the school food environment.

### **Deliverables**

Contract deliverables include:

- Engage with FoodCorps project committee, made up of staff and stakeholders, throughout the

evaluation timeline

- Collaborate with FoodCorps to further develop and strengthen a farm to school food environment analysis instrument; advise FoodCorps on the data collection and analysis plan for the instrument
- Design an evaluation plan for the project outlining data collection methods, sampling technique, evaluation approach and instruments
- Determine feasible number of matched pair study sites given project timeline and budget
- Collaborate with FoodCorps staff to engage and coordinate with those sites that participate in the evaluation project, as well as provide necessary training for implementing the evaluation
- Collect and analyze data measuring school food consumption and school food environment
- Provide final written reports on both instrument development and use as well as evaluation findings
- Provide final presentation (in-person or virtual) to FoodCorps staff and key site partners
- Provide regular updates to FoodCorps staff lead and project advisory committee, as agreed upon by both parties
- Submit invoices for work performed quarterly
- Obtain Institutional Review Board approval for the project, as necessary

### **Request for Proposals (RFP) and Project Timeline**

This study will unfold according to the following two-year timeline. Specific dates are subject to modification.

- November 2014: Contractors identified
- November 2014 through May 2015: Planning, design, and instrument development; identification of sites for consumption study the following school year
- May 2015: Instrument completed and available to be integrated into programming for the upcoming program year
- June through July 2015: Site training and preparation
- July 2015 through November 2016: Data collection and analysis
- December 2016 (negotiable): Final report and presentation
- Winter 2016 onward: Evaluation findings reviewed, distributed, and implemented

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Release RFP	Monday, June 30, 2014
Optional Q&A Call #1	Monday, July 7, 2014
Optional Q&A Call #2	Friday, July 11, 2014
RFP closes	Friday, August 29, 2014
Respondents notified of outcome	Week of November 3, 2014
Contract commencement	December 2014
Final report and presentation	November/December 2016 (negotiable)

## **Contract Application Process and Timeline**

To be considered for this contract, applicants must submit a succinct proposal that addresses the following topics, totaling no more than ten (10) single-spaced pages (excluding appendix materials).

Upon review, applicants may receive a request for additional information or for a phone interview.

### ***A. Executive Summary***

The executive summary will consist of the proposal cover letter highlighting the contents of the proposal. Please include a description of your interest in performing this evaluation, including interest in specific elements.

### ***B. Organizational Overview***

This section will include background information on the applicant's organization and should give details of organizational experience with similar projects. Provide an overview of the business or academic philosophy, values, practices, and areas of expertise and specialization that distinguish your organization from your competitors/colleagues. Include information about what your organization is best known for, the signature approach and strengths of your organization, and other information that describes your organization's unique capacity to perform this project, including the method by which your clients' needs are understood and integrated into project designs.

### ***C. Project Staffing and Experience***

This section will detail your organization's professional expertise and experience as it relates to the staff working on this specific evaluation. This section must include the proposed staffing, deployment, and organization of personnel to be assigned to this project. Staffing changes may be made through the mutual consent of the selected contractor and FoodCorps after the contract award.

The applicant shall provide information as to the qualifications and experience of the project staff as well as the responsibilities to be assigned to each person as follows:

1. Lead Evaluator or Researcher: Identify one (1) individual who will lead and manage the contract work. Provide details of this person's experience, education, affiliations, memberships, awards, and recognitions received for similar services. Define the percent of this person's time that will be devoted exclusively to managing the FoodCorps project. The lead evaluator or researcher's resume should be included in the appendix.
2. Project Team: Identify by name, title and role each proposed project team member on the proposed FoodCorps project. Include relevant experience and responsibilities to be assigned for this project.
3. Other Staff: Identify other staff member(s) who will work on the FoodCorps evaluation, and how much time would be spent on the FoodCorps project.

### ***D. Technical Proposal***

This section shall include, in narrative, outline, and/or graph form, the strategic plan proposed to accomplish the scope of work and address the evaluation questions. This section must provide a comprehensive narrative that sets out the proposed evaluation plan and methodology intended as well as how the methodology meets the needs of the project. The applicant must present a thorough understanding of the goals of the program and scope of the project and demonstrate an adherence to the required timeline. Please include a detailed timeline that relates to the approach that you are proposing.

### ***E. Budgetary Proposal***

This section shall outline costs associated with the proposed project. Note that the contractor will be expected to provide its own space and equipment to conduct work on the project and may be expected to cover ordinary and necessary business expenses.

1. Personnel Costs: Identify the daily rates of propose team member, distinguishing between in-house and subcontracted personnel, and calculate the total costs required to execute the proposed evaluation within the required timeline.
2. Material Production Costs: Identify all costs related to the production of materials for the evaluation project.
3. Travel Expenses: Identify all reimbursable travel expenses.
4. Institutional Indirect Cost Rates: If the organization is an academic institution, please include the organization's indirect cost rate, to which FoodCorps would apply its indirect cost rate policy.
5. Miscellaneous Expenses: Identify all miscellaneous expenses that will be incurred in performance of this contract, not previously covered in the items listed above. Submit rates for each miscellaneous expense identified. Any costs associated with the FoodCorps account outside the scope of this price proposal should also be listed. Detail how the expenses will be verified.

#### ***F. Appendix***

As an appendix, please provide copies of up to three recent, related research projects or evaluation reports the lead contractor(s) have conducted/led, including: (A) relevant evaluation of school food consumption, and (B) projects including relevant environmental assessment or implementation rubrics. For highly relevant projects, full reports are preferred. Otherwise, executive summaries are acceptable. Please also include the resume or curriculum vitae for the lead contractor.

**Have questions?** There will be two optional Q&A phone calls leading up to the proposal submission deadline. They will take place at **1pm Pacific Time (4pm Eastern Time) on Monday, July 7 and Friday, July 11. To join the call, dial -----**. For those who cannot attend, a call recording will be made available upon request.

**Submit proposals via email to ----- by Friday, August 29, 2014 at 5pm Eastern Time.** Subject line should indicate "RFP – FoodCorps Environment and Consumption Evaluation – Contractor Name." Late submissions will not be considered. Phone interviews or additional materials may be requested with applicants prior to final selection. The candidates will be notified in November.

## **Selection Criteria**

A contractor will be selected based on key criteria that include:

- Completeness of required proposal elements
- Demonstrated expertise in food environment research, analysis, and instrument development
- Demonstrated expertise in nutritional analysis, such as plate waste methods
- Demonstrated experience in farm to school or school garden research and evaluation
- Demonstrated experience conducting multiple successful school-based food consumption studies utilizing control schools
- Strong experience conducting multi-site evaluations from a distance
- Clarity, rigor, and feasibility of evaluation methodology and approach
- Capacity to manage data collection across all sites, including ability to travel where necessary and to inform and train service site supervisors, school staff, and FoodCorps AmeriCorps members who will be involved as a study sites
- Ability to complete the evaluation project within the required timeline, as evidenced in the proposal
- Ability to obtain and manage Institutional Review Board approval for all study sites as necessary

## **Contract Compensation**

Total funds available for the two-year contract are up to \$----- (all inclusive, payable quarterly over a period of November 2014 through December 2016 (negotiable)). Contractors from research organizations who are interested in applying existing funding to the project are welcome to include information about such opportunities in their application.

## **Position Classification**

The position described is an independent contractor position. Employees of the contractor shall not be employees of FoodCorps.