COOKING MATTERS

Evaluation of Cooking Matters Core – Request for Proposal

The Food Trust is pleased to release the Request for Proposal (RFP), which seeks an evaluator to conduct an impact evaluation of Cooking Matters' new curriculum, Cooking Matters Core. Cooking Matters Core is designed to help organizations and implementers reach individuals, caregivers and families with dynamic content about purchasing and preparing delicious, nutritious foods. The evaluation will test Cooking Matters Core's impact on purchasing and preparing foods that meet nutrition, budget, and personal needs.

RFP response due: July 5, 2024 by 11:59pm ****updated****
Send proposals and questions to: Heidi Gorniok at hgorniok@thefoodtrust.org with subject line "Cooking Matters Core Evaluation: [Insert Organization Name]"
Desired start date: July 29, 2024 ****updated****
Desired completion date: September 30, 2025 (flexible)

Overview

Cooking Matters is a recently acquired program of The Food Trust, an organization that works with neighborhoods, institutions, retailers, farmers and policymakers across the country to ensure delicious, nutritious food for all. Cooking Matters provides communities with evidence-based, customizable, and innovative tools to help individuals, caregivers and families prepare to serve healthy, affordable meals. As a trusted resource for families, Cooking Matters turns stressful mealtime challenges into moments of confidence and joy.

Cooking Matters Core is a new, flexible intervention designed to support participants in purchasing and preparing foods that meet their nutrition, budget and personal needs. Cooking Matters Core provides implementers the flexibility to combine content to meet learners' needs with respect to time available and content relevance. Materials and training are available through the Programming Portal, accessible at CookingMatters.org. The Programming Portal includes handouts, lesson plans, recipes and implementer support.

Audience

Cooking Matters seeks to reach individuals, caregivers and families who come from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and may use SNAP and WIC benefits to help feed their families. Successful programs meet the needs of local communities and may look different depending on community and audience needs. Thus, Cooking Matters Core is specifically designed to be delivered by local

community implementers and also considers the perspectives of others (e.g., participants, funders) in the implementation of the curriculum.

Cooking Matters Core Elements

Cooking Matters Core offers 12 lessons to be delivered in 30-60 minutes. A cooking and recipe add-on may be offered with any of the 12 lessons to include a hands-on food prep component. These lessons may then be combined into a series to meet audience needs. Each lesson has several relevant handouts and there are numerous recipes to choose from based on the amount of time available. All elements may be mixed and matched to customize a program that meets local audience needs and curriculum materials are available in English and Spanish.

Project Scope

The evaluation will test Cooking Matters Core's impact on purchasing, preparing and consuming foods that meet nutrition, budget and personal needs. The evaluation design of Cooking Matters Core must align with SNAP-Ed's research-tested approach. See the SNAP-Ed checklist for more information about meeting the requirements for a research-tested curriculum.

The Food Trust seeks an evaluation team to take the following approach to ensure Cooking Matters Core is a research-tested curriculum:
- Build and implement a controlled study design that assesses the curriculum's impact on participants and a non-participant comparison group;
- Adapt and validate evaluation tools that measure the impact of Cooking Matters Core on participants;
- Evaluate English and/or Spanish Cooking Matters Core options;
- Produce one or more publications under review or accepted in a peer-reviewed journal;
- Deliver supporting evaluation materials to The Food Trust (e.g., SNAP-Ed Toolkit application).

1. Evaluation Tools
The evaluator will build and/or adapt validated evaluation tools to measure the impact of participation in Cooking Matters Core. At a minimum, The Food Trust desires a self-report survey to use alongside the Cooking Matters Core. The survey would be available to implementers desiring to demonstrate impact that meets SNAP-Ed evaluation requirements. Cooking Matters has a suite of validated surveys from which to build on as appropriate. The evaluator will align the intended evaluation tool with the Cooking Matters Core curriculum content. The following validation processes will need to be undertaken: build the survey, consult an expert committee for content analysis and validity, conduct pilot testing with current Cooking Matters implementers and their participants, analyze pilot results, and modify the survey as needed. In addition, the evaluator can propose and implement other evaluation tools (e.g., qualitative, dietary recalls) for the purpose of the impact evaluation.

2. Impact Evaluation

The evaluator will propose an evaluation design that tests the impact of Cooking Matters Core with the following considerations:

- There must be an intervention and a comparison group. The intervention group can be participants in the Cooking Matters network or the evaluation team can propose participants. The evaluator will work with The Food Trust team to identify a comparison group. If desired, the comparison group can crossover to Cooking Matters Core for a delayed intervention.
- The intervention and comparison groups should reflect diverse individuals, caregivers and families: i.e. Household size and configuration; Race, ethnicity, gender, age; Culture; SNAP/WIC participation.
- The evaluation team can propose to evaluate the English and/or Spanish version of the curriculum.
- The evaluation must test the impact of a single stand-alone session, short series and long series of Cooking Matters Core.
    - Single standalone session with recipe/food demo
    - Short series of 3 lessons with recipe/food demo
    - Long series of 5 lessons with recipe/food demo
- The primary evaluation question this effort should answer is: To what extent does Cooking Matters Core lead to purchasing, preparing and consuming foods that meet participants' nutrition, budget and personal needs at varying dosages?
- Secondary evaluation questions to consider are: (1) To what extent does Cooking Matters lead to increased confidence among participants to purchase and prepare foods that meet participants' nutrition, budget and personal needs? (2) How does the curriculum support participants' utilization of SNAP and WIC benefits? (3) Do participants perceive the content as relevant?
- Impact for the purposes of this evaluation is defined as a change in the purchasing, preparing and consuming of foods that meet participants' nutrition, budget and personal needs.
- The evaluation team must manage data collection and analyze the findings, and provide resulting anonymous data files and program files to The Food Trust.
- The evaluation must be approved by an Institutional Review Board.
- The evaluation team should work with The Food Trust team on a regular and ongoing basis throughout the project.

3. Peer-reviewed Publication(s)

At least one peer-reviewed publication should be under review or accepted by the end of the project period that highlights Cooking Matters Core's impacts on participant outcomes when compared to a comparison group.

4. Project Deliverables

The evaluator will deliver the following:

- Peer-reviewed publications (under review or accepted) that describe methods and impact

- SNAP-Ed Toolkit application draft
- Anonymous data files
- Evaluation brief summarizing the impact evaluation findings for implementers to use in justifying use of the curriculum
- All evaluation tools developed and used for the evaluation
- Presentation of results

Project Budget Details

The proposed budget can include design and tool development, piloting and main trial implementation, data analysis, project write-up and publication and should be broken out into the corresponding project components.

Proposal Requirements

Please include the following in your proposal response:
- Overview of your company and team
- Overview of how you will meet each component of the project scope
- Proposed timeline from start to finalized deliverables
- Requested budget, broken out into project components, as well as budget justification
- Any key differentiators about your team
- Biosketch, resume or CV for key personnel
- Terms & conditions
- Examples of your work that will help us understand your style and approach (optional)

Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP with a proposal for the evaluation of Cooking Matters Core. We look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact Heidi Gorniok at hgorniok@thefoodtrust.org.