



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

DATE: January 16, 2008

Dear State Directors:

This letter is to inform you of funding available to State agencies (SAs) to implement provisions related to certification and verification of student eligibility to receive free and reduced price meal benefits in school nutrition (SN) programs.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (Act) of 2004, P.L. 108-265, provides a one time appropriation of \$9 million to be used to assist States in implementing mandatory direct certification and other provisions related to certification and verification of students' eligibility to receive free and reduced price meal benefits in the SN programs. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awarded approximately \$5.4 million of the available funding in fiscal years (FYs) 2006 and 2007. FNS is soliciting proposals from SAs for a third round of funding to aid in implementing these procedures as specified in sections 104 and 105 of the Act; that is, direct certification, direct verification, electronic application, electronic signatures, and household applications.

Subject to availability, the 2008 funding for implementation of the new certification and verification provisions will be awarded on a competitive basis with priority given to those SAs that did not receive a grant previously. Although priority will be extended to those SAs that did not receive a grant award under this program in FY 2006 and 2007, ALL eligible SAs will be considered for funding. Eligible applicants include any SAs that administer SN, Food Stamp, or Medicaid Programs; however, only one application per State or a consortium of States will be considered. Therefore, if both a SN and another agency within the same State wish to receive funding, they must submit a joint application.

The enclosed application materials outline the requirements to which a State must adhere in order to be considered for funding. When preparing your application for funding, please provide a narrative description of the certification, verification, electronic application/signature and/or household application system that will be developed or implemented; the activity(ies) the SN, Food Stamp and/or Medicaid agency will use to address the proposed development or implementation; and the amount budgeted for each activity by each agency. FNS will evaluate all proposals and select those that provide the most comprehensive approach. In keeping with Congressional intent of ensuring direct certification for free meal benefits for any child who is a member of a household receiving food stamps, FNS will give special weight to proposals which emphasize direct certification. In addition, in order to maximize the utilization of funding, FNS will give special weight to proposals submitted by a consortium of states. Therefore, up to four additional points will be added to SAs proposals which have a greater emphasis on direct certification and/or consortia. These additional points will be added to the panel's total score, so that the maximum total points a proposal could receive is 108.

State Directors
Page 2

Included with this letter is specific information needed to apply for funding to implement certification and verification procedures. Enclosed for your use in preparing your application are the following: 1) Request for Application; 2) Applicable attachments; 3) Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; 4) Form SF-424A, Budget Information; 5) Form SF-424B, Assurances-Non Construction Programs, and 6) Certification/Disclosure Requirements Related to Lobbying.

All grant applications must be **received** by FNS on or before **5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) April 16, 2008**. Applications must be mailed directly to FNS at the address noted in the Request for Applications or submitted electronically by accessing www.grants.gov. Applications submitted via email or fax **will not** be accepted. If you choose to mail the application, we strongly suggest using a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and allows you to track delivery to FNS. If you opt to submit the application via the www.grants.gov website, there are a number of steps in the registration process that will be required before the application may be submitted electronically (See the attached Request for Applications). Please be aware that in order to use the grants.gov system, the user will need to register online and obtain both a Data Universal Number (DUNS) and a Contract Registry Number. Thus, it is very important that users of the grants.gov system familiarize themselves with the requirements for system use. When using the grants.gov portal to apply, we strongly recommend that you submit the online application at least 2 weeks prior to the application due date in case there are problems with the government-wide website and you want to submit your application via a mail delivery service. Applicants must also send an email to Lisa.Johnson@fns.usda.gov advising that the application was submitted through the grants.gov portal. This email notification must be received no later than **5:00 p.m. EST** on the due date as well.

It is your responsibility to meet the **April 16, 2008, 5:00 p.m. EST due date**. Late applications will not be considered in the competition. Furthermore, we will not consider additions or revisions to applications once they are received by FNS.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Johnson of the Grants Management Division via email at Lisa.Johnson@fns.usda.gov or by telephone at (703) 305-2848. We look forward to receiving your application for funding to implement certification and verification procedures.

Sincerely,

Original Signed
ROBERT M. EADIE
Acting Director
Child Nutrition Division

Original Signed
LAEL J. LUBING
Director
Grants Management Division

Enclosures