

FISCAL YEAR 2008 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION GRANT SUMMARIES

On September 17, 2008, the Food and Nutrition Service announced the awardees of the fiscal year (FY) 2008 Food Stamp Program Participation Grants. These grants are targeted to State agencies, public health or educational entities, or private nonprofit entities such as community-based or faith-based organizations, food banks, or other emergency feeding organizations. The grants are specifically for projects aimed at simplifying the food stamp application and eligibility determination systems or improving access to food stamp benefits by eligible households. Brief descriptions of the FY 2008 projects are provided below.

El Paso County Department of Human Services will upgrade technology used in administering the Food Stamp Program and develop new partnerships with the local community health center, local Head Start Grantee and a private non-profit faith-based organization to improve access to food benefits among the elderly and Hispanic population. Some of the proposed project activities include a plan to bar code and scan documentation received in food stamp applications and recertifications to eliminate paper applications and implementation of an improved call management system to track and manage calls to the food stamp call center.

United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona in partnership with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (Medicaid), the Arizona Department of Health Services Bureau of USDA Nutrition Programs, the Arizona Agencies on Aging and multiple faith-based and community partners will implement a "Food for All" project. The project will emphasize services to the elderly and outreach in geographic areas that contain large concentrations of Hispanics. Plans are to revise internal policy and procedures and modernize the current public benefits delivery systems using innovative technology and new collaborations with faith-based and community partners.

Denver Department of Human Services plans to implement a Food Stamp Improvement Project that will improve Food Stamp Program delivery through technology upgrades. The goals of the project are to create a framework to manage Denver's Food Stamp Program; streamline and expedite the current application method to improve service and ensure that all eligible applicants receive benefits in a timely manner.

Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) in partnership with seven additional community-based organizations will implement a comprehensive initiative designed to increase food stamp participation, especially among eligible elderly and Hispanic populations in a five-county Circuit. DCF plans to create a direct telephone link between applicants and interviewers, streamline the current business process, establish new partnerships and enhance current ones and implement training and community awareness programs.

California Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) Consortium IV in cooperation with three local community agencies plans to enhance its C-IVYourself web-based application which allows customer to apply for food stamps via the internet. The project would add a bilingual "Report My Changes" section that would allow customers to complete recertification during non-traditional work hours and a "Check My Benefits" section that will allow customers at a secure location to obtain information regarding case status, allotment amount, remaining benefits, important dates and their worker's name and telephone number. The final piece includes adding additional questions to the on-line application to streamline the application process for the customer and the county and be more compatible with existing C-VI functionality.

Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) will conduct a project in nine counties, involving thirteen offices, to simplify the recertification application process and improve access to benefits. Through partnerships with the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger and Homelessness and Oregon Housing and Community Services, plans are to target five offices with large Hispanic and Native American populations. The project proposes to utilize scanning and imaging technology to capture recertification information and simplify the application process by moving away from the paper application, reducing the number of times clients will need to come to the office; eliminating duplicate paperwork and supporting internal tracking of food stamp recertification applications.

Alabama Department of Human Resources plans to develop and implement a statewide web-based application program that would simplify the application process for eligible applicants and further increase access to the Food Stamp Program. The system will allow potential recipients to apply and enter basic interview information from a web-based portal either from the homes or anywhere internet access is available, including locations set up in conjunction with partner agencies. Plans are to establish partnerships with the Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Alabama Family Resource Centers to provide convenient locations where applicants would have online access to apply for food stamps.

City of New York Human Resources Administration (HRA) in partnership with the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) and Food Bank for New York City will implement the Nutritional Enhancement for Elder through Data Sharing (NEEDS) Programs that will target senior citizens enrolled in the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program. Plans are to create an application process improvement for senior citizens by enabling them to apply or recertify for Food Stamp benefits through a link from DFTA's SCRIE database to HRA's Food Stamp Paperless Office System. Applicants would not have to provide the same information previously collected by the DFTA.