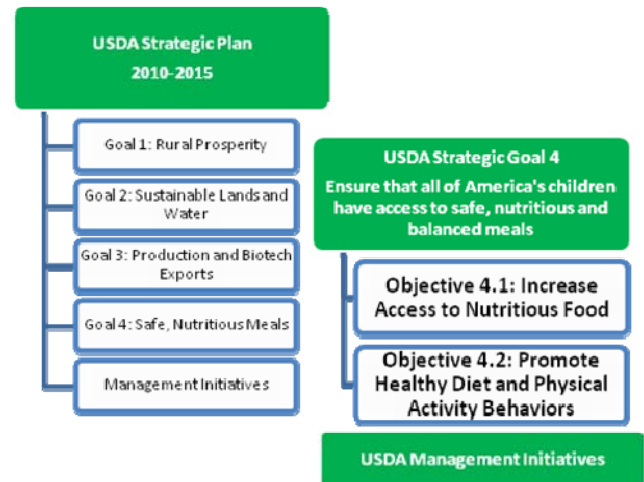




FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE FY 2013 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) mission is “to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.”

FNS’s ongoing responsibilities and performance objectives are captured in USDA’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015 under Goal 4, *Ensure that All of America’s Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious and Balanced Meals*, and its two supporting objectives: Objective 4.1: *Increase Access to Nutritious Food*, and Objective 4.2: *Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors*.



While these program-focused goals provide broad direction to our work, our challenge is to focus FNS’s resources on initiatives that most effectively advance these goals. Our annual strategic planning process identifies our most critical priorities and defines the work we will commit together to support them. **This document captures the results of that process for Fiscal Year 2013.**

Objective 4.1: Increase Access to Nutritious Food

- **Improve Access to Nutrition Assistance:** Raise awareness and improving understanding of eligibility requirements to ensure eligible people, can access program benefits for which they are eligible easily and with dignity and respect.
- **Improve Program Integrity:** Maintain public confidence and good stewardship through efficient program delivery, strong customer service, and reduced improper payments.

Objective 4.2: Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Behaviors

Improve Nutrition: Improve the food served in schools and child care centers, and promote healthful choices in SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs, to support healthier choices and promote better health.

USDA Management Initiatives

- **Cultural Transformation:** Make FNS a more inclusive, high-performance organization by promoting a diverse workplace where there is equity of opportunity and employees are empowered to reach their potential.
- **Honor Civil Rights throughout FNS Programs:** Strengthen civil rights in Federal program delivery and employment through better business processes and improve efficiency through nationally-managed strategic performance evaluations.
- **Administrative Solutions:** Support the Administrative Solutions Project by committing time, talent, and resources to achieve the Secretary’s Initiative.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
*RAISE AWARENESS AND REDUCE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AMONG
ELIGIBLE LOW-INCOME LATINOS, SENIORS, AND CHILDREN*

At the core of the FNS mission is our responsibility to provide access to nutrition assistance program benefits to every eligible person who needs and seek assistance. The major nutrition assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Child Nutrition Programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), are the first line in the Nation's defense against hunger and poor nutrition. Too often people who need help do not participate in SNAP or WIC because they do not know they are eligible, do not realize the size and value of benefits available to them, or find applying too difficult or burdensome. Similarly, not all eligible children participate in the school meals programs. Some bring healthful food from home, but others may forego a nutritious lunch entirely due to lack of understanding about program eligibility requirements.

FNS promotes program access through appropriate outreach to program partners and potential recipients to ensure that eligible people can make an informed choice for themselves and their families; research and analysis to identify reasons for and potential solutions to participation gaps; work with States and tribes to streamline applications, use integrated technology and improve business processes; and operational changes to policies and program requirements. Certain eligible program populations, such as low-income seniors, Latinos, and children during the summer, participate at lower rates than the general eligible population, which suggests the potential for a "knowledge gap" about program eligibility requirements. FNS targets special efforts to improve access for such underserved groups.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Promote awareness of underused programs among seniors and Latinos** to support informed program participation decisions and work with the Corporation for National and Community Service to fund and train VISTA Associates in support.
- **Ensure that State changes in SNAP business processes support better access to benefits**, by assessing the impact of changes underway, promoting best practices, ensuring that program rules prevent changes that undermine client access and other program goals and conducting SNAP Access Reviews.
- **Improve access to underutilized Child Nutrition Programs**, especially summer meals for children and CACFP suppers.
- **Explore policy options to modernize program benefit utilization**, including online SNAP food purchasing for seniors.
- **Support USDA's StrikeForce Initiative** by achieving 3 percent increases in SFSP meals; children receiving free and reduced price breakfasts; and SNAP redemptions in farmers markets in StrikeForce states.
- **Address the challenge of child hunger** by investing in childhood hunger research projects and demonstration projects.

IMPROVE INTEGRITY IN NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
MAINTAIN PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND EXERCISE
GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF FEDERAL FUNDS BY REDUCING IMPROPER PAYMENTS

Promoting access to nutrition assistance programs – programs that have never been more urgently needed than they are today – goes hand-in-hand with managing them in a manner that ensures public confidence and maximizes the impact of the Federal investment. Americans expect and deserve a government that ensures wise management of the public investment in nutrition assistance is managed wisely. Without that, we risk undermining public confidence in their value. Furthermore, strong management ensures that those most in need of nutrition assistance receive it, and that scarce resources are not wasted by error or abuse. FNS uses all available opportunities, including new communication and eGovernment technologies, to promote secure and efficient program delivery hand-in-hand with strong customer service.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Improve monitoring and action against SNAP client integrity threats** by creating incentives for States to use integrity data in EBT and client databases to target investigations and follow up on clients with excessive card replacements.
- **Improve monitoring and action against SNAP retailer integrity threats** by publishing and implementing final rules on SNAP retailer sanctions to include strengthening trafficking civil money penalty eligibility requirements, immediate payment suspension, trafficking controls and fraud investigations; and improving focus on high risk stores, improvements to retailer management systems, and training.
- **Modernize oversight of authorized SNAP retailers** and centralize business processes by completing implementation of the retailer management modernization initiative.
- **Increase State investment in program integrity** with guidance encouraging States to reinvest IPV claims and SNAP performance bonuses into anti-fraud activities.
- **Optimize SNAP's ability to support and connect recipients to work.**
- **Improve strategies to reduce improper payments in the school meal programs**, including updated measure of the cost of improper payments, and exploration of an administrative review "Strike Force" and school meals State exchange program, and publication of final rules on independent review of school meal applications, and fines and disqualifications.
- **Focus Federal oversight in WIC on vendor management**, including a commitment to complete a management evaluation focused on vendor management in each State by the end of FY 2014.
- **Ensure continued financial integrity** by conducting 95% of required financial management and program reviews, implement web-based Treasury administrative payment pilot, maintain unqualified financial statements opinion, and completing Lean Six Sigma project on SNAP retailer debt collection.

IMPROVE NUTRITION

IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS IN FOOD IN SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE CENTERS, AND PROMOTE HEALTHFUL CHOICES IN SNAP AND OTHER NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

For too many people in the United States, poor dietary choices and inadequate physical activity contribute to devastating health conditions, including overweight and obesity, coronary heart disease, hypertension, and heightened risk of stroke, diabetes, and some cancers. Perhaps the most troubling of these conditions is the epidemic rate of childhood obesity. Over the last 30 years, the childhood obesity rate has more than tripled. This has serious implications for the Nation's future.

The nutrition assistance programs, which reach 1 in 4 people in the United States in the course of a year, offer a prime opportunity to improve diets and promote better health. We are working with schools and child care centers across the nation to ensure that all foods served in school contribute to good health. We are also working to support and encourage healthy choices among SNAP clients through nutrition education and promotion, expansion of the use of benefits for fresh produce at farmer's markets, and tests of innovative strategies to incentivize consumption of fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods. Finally, we are continuously working to improve the offerings in our food distribution programs to expand delicious choices that contribute to healthy diets.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Advance implementation of Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act improvements in the school food environment**, by providing technical assistance to schools as they implement new school lunch and breakfast meal patterns, proposing new standards for competitive foods and CACFP meal patterns, proposing professional standards for school food service personnel, and enhancing technical assistance and oversight for the Coordinated Review Effort.
- **Improve school program operations in support of healthier meals** by facilitating cooperative purchasing, encouraging States to better use USDA Foods, identifying and sharing evidence-based best practices to reduce plate waste and promote an attractive food environment and encourage community and student engagement in menu planning.
- **Strengthen SNAP's ability to promote healthy eating** by sharing best practices in promoting farmers' markets redemptions and developing an initiative to help SNAP participants make the link between benefits and healthy food choices through MyPlate resources and readily available tools.
- **Support farm to school initiatives** by increasing the availability of local food in schools, fielding a nationwide farm to school census, providing guidance and technical assistance related specifically to local and regional procurement, managing the next farm to school grant process, assigning and supporting regional farm to school points of contact and activities, launching a farm to school planning toolkit and other information resources, and supporting farm to school visits and events.

PROMOTE STRONG CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

STRENGTHEN CIVIL RIGHTS IN FEDERAL PROGRAM DELIVERY AND EMPLOYMENT THROUGH BETTER BUSINESS PROCESSES, TRAINING AND OVERSIGHT

Ensuring equal and timely access to nutrition assistance programs for all customers regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and other bases is a critical component of the FNS mission. And maintaining equal employment opportunity for all and fair and equitable treatment of Agency staff are not only the right things to do – they are critical to advancing our mission effectively.

FNS seeks to be a model in the Federal Government in honoring the civil rights of its employees and constituents. We are committed to steady and continuous improvement in the protection and promotion of civil rights for program clients and FNS employees.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Provide clear, current, and actionable guidance** to ensure compliance with civil rights policies by update FNS Instruction on Civil Rights Compliance and Enforcement, developing training modules for State agencies and program staff, and updating regulations, policies and website to include the new USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form.
- **Ensure continued review and oversight** of civil rights practices by completing civil rights compliance reviews of 21 State agencies and developing a Compliance Review Risk Assessment Module and Questionnaire.
- **Improve reporting of Agency accomplishments** to support the annual Agency Head Assessment.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

ENGAGE EMPLOYEES TO TRANSFORM FNS INTO A MODEL AGENCY

Cultural transformation is the process of promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace where there is equity of opportunity and all employees are empowered to reach their full potential and create a higher performing organization. Through the thoughtful planning of activities and effective communication, FNS seeks to make CT – and its focus on leadership; employee development; recruitment and retention; talent management; customer service and community outreach; process improvement; diversity; and labor/management collaboration – an even more ingrained part of the agency's fabric.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Enhance leadership engagement** through leadership roundtables and encouragement of performance improvement projects and training.
- **Make FNCS an employer of choice and retain good employees** through recruitment and hiring of talent from underrepresented groups, an employee recognition program, enhanced telework, and Make Health and Wellness Initiatives.
- **Better understand FNCS and the people we serve** by participating in Days of Service, organizing visits to program sites, and holding Program and Division Fairs.
- **Instill a culture of performance improvement** by training a cadre of FNCS instructors for Lean Six Sigma and other performance improvement skills, and establishing a process to identify, select and monitor enterprise performance improvement projects.
- **Empower employees to reach their full potential** by examining issue of merit based promotions and hiring, striving for equitable workload distribution, and developing a succession plan.
- **Embrace workforce diversity and workplace inclusion to promote a higher performing organization** by developing an effective Special Emphasis Program Assessment plan, hosting opportunities to share cultural differences (to include individuals with hidden and targeted disabilities), facilitating employee forums on barriers, successes and challenges of employee development, empowerment and retention, and establishing an FNCS diversity council to provide advice on employment gaps and barriers.
- **Strengthen the solid working relationship between FNCS management and labor unions representing its employees** by using the Labor Management Forum to share information and address management issues (such as workload distribution), negotiating telework pilot program, refreshing perspectives on adequacy of and satisfaction with all employment conditions within new contract negotiations, and enlisting union support in supporting additional employee and leadership engagement.
- **Enhance employee development and training opportunities** through mentoring, Career Pathing, a learning continuum to include aspiring leaders, and FNSU.

ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS

SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Support the Administrative Solutions Project Implementation Plan by committing time, talent and resources to achieve the Secretary's Initiative. Actively engage the agency to implement milestones through the phases of execution: planning and preparation, implementation and evaluation.

FNS seeks to assure the quality and level of customer service within agency administrative programs are being met relative to customer satisfaction and timeliness, represent the agency and USDA in implementing the milestones across the Department, and engage stakeholder participation, collaboration, and teamwork.

At FNS, we are involved in the Administrative Solutions Project through such initiatives as the Minneapolis Data Center Consolidation Initiative, SNAP Call Center Consolidation, as well as robust participation of USDA-wide Blueprint for Stronger Services. The goal is to provide leadership and collaboration on USDA crosscutting teams to ensure the timely and successful implementation of both the "initial improvements" and subsequent recommendations.

In FY 2013, we will:

- **Optimize information technology policy and applications** by migrating all applications from the Minneapolis Data Center, modernizing the FNS website; and beginning implementation of the FMMI Deployment 4 (D4) replacement of the IPAS system.
- **Support USDA OWCP, Strategic Sourcing, Space Utilization (telework, hoteling), and Marketplace initiatives** by committing time, talent and resources.
- **Develop best practices for Contracts Administration** by developing methods to capture cost reduction/cost avoidance savings.
- **Identify and select a USDA organization to provide FNCS Human Resources operational services.**