



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

September 30, 2005

Dear State Agency Director:

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (Act) of 2004, P.L. 108-265, authorizes the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to award \$9,000,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2006 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 school nutrition (SN) programs. FNS is soliciting proposals for funding from State agencies (SAs) that require financial assistance 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.

The \$9,000,000 that is available for implementation of the new certification and verification provisions will be awarded on a competitive basis. Eligible applicants include all 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 wish to receive funding, they must submit a joint application.

The attached application materials outline the requirements a State must adhere to 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 of the above; the number of staff days the agency(ies) anticipates spending on each activity; and the amount budgeted for each activity by each agency. FNS staff 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 eligible for and/or receiving food stamps, FNS will give special weight to proposals which emphasize direct certification. In addition, in order to maximize funding availability, FNS will give special weight to proposals submitted by a consortium of states. Therefore, up to four (4) additional points will be added to SAs which have a greater emphasis on direct certification or consortia, respectively. These additional points will be added to the panel's total score, so that the maximum total points a proposal could receive is 108.

The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

Included with this letter is specific information needed to apply for funding to implement certification and verification procedures. Attached 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.

We encourage you to apply for funding to implement certification and verification procedures in an effort to increase student participation in school nutrition programs by simplifying the certification and verification process.

To be considered for funding, your completed application must be received by FNS on or before 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, **January 6, 2006**. Applications must be mailed directly to Lisa Johnson, Grant Officer, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738, Alexandria, VA 22302 or submitted electronically by accessing www.grants.gov. All applicants that opt to submit their application/proposal via the www.grants.gov website must also send an email to Lisa.Johnson@fns.usda.gov advising that the application was submitted through the grants.gov portal. This email must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the due date as well. If you opt to mail your application, we strongly suggest using a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and allows you to track delivery to FNS. Applications received after this date and time will not be considered for funding nor will e-mailed or faxed applications. Also, additions or revisions to applications already received will not be considered.

Please be aware that in order to use the grants.gov system, the user will need 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. We suggest you visit the site sometime prior to attempting to submit your application electronically to review the instructions on how to obtain a DUNS assignment as well as a Contract Registry Number. While both numbers are required to submit the application electronically via grants.gov, the DUNS number is a requirement even if the application is submitted in hardcopy format.

FNS will notify those SAs approved for funding in February 2006. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Johnson, Grants Officer, at (703) 305-2848. We look forward to receiving your application for funding to implement certification and verification procedures.

Sincerely,

LAEL J. LUBING
Director
Grants Management Division

STANLEY C. GARNETT
Director
Child Nutrition Division

Enclosures